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# THE HAGENBECK-WALLACE SHOWS

COMBINED.



JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1974





## THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Vol. 18, No. 1

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Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Editor

Joseph T. Bradbury, Fred D. Pfening, III Associate Editors

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CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC., Stuart Thayer, President, 276 Sumac Lane, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48105; Tom Parkinson, Vice President, P.O. Box 233, Savoy, Ill. 61874; Julian Jimenez, Secretary-Treasurer, 1325 Commercial St., Atchison, Kan. 66002.

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### THIS MONTH'S COVER

As part of our continuing coverage of bill posting and lithograph companies we have selected two interesting examples of one sheet posters.

The Hagenbeck-Wallace bill on the front cover was used during the 1912 season. It was designed and printed by the Donaldson Lithograph Company of Newport, Kentucky. The bill became a stock clown design for that company.

By the middle 1930s Donaldson had redrawn the original design and it was used by Russell Bros. Circus. By opening the magazine and looking at both the front and back covers at once it is clear that two different artists drew these two posters of the same design. Both are from the Pfening Collection.

### Bill Posting and Advance Cars To Be Continued

The next installment of the article on advance cars and bill posting will appear in an early issue. If you have information that would contribute to the article please write to the editor.

We are interested in details of design of advance cars, circuses that were taken

over by litho companies for lack of payment of bills, opposition wars and any other interesting details concerning the general subject.

Unusual photos of bill posting stands as well as photos of lithos from smaller old circuses are also needed.

### BACK ISSUES OF BANDWAGON

All Issues	1966
All Issues	1967
All Issues	1968
All Issues	1969
All Issues	1970
All Issues	1971
All Issues	1972

Due to increased postage rates the price is now \$1.40 each.

### BANDWAGON BACK ISSUES

2515 Dorset Rd.  
Columbus, Ohio 43221

### NEW MEMBERS

Peter B. Briggs 2114  
10F Forest Park  
Durham, New Hampshire 03824

Harry B. LaBrie 2115  
9896 Ranger Rd.  
Fairfax, Va. 22030

Forrest G. Mahannah 2116  
20599 Almar Drive  
Cleveland, Ohio 44122

Peter T. N. Arnett 2117  
1st Helen's Close  
Portsmouth, Hampshire, England

Aubrey Lovely 2118  
107 Linnhaven Trailer Ct.  
Brunswick, Maine 04011

John H. Walker 2119  
257 East Main  
Fredonia, N. Y. 14063

Paul W. Himan 2120  
1407 Althea Dr.  
Mt. Prospect, Ill. 60056

### REPRINTS OF CHRISTMAS COVER AVAILABLE

A small supply of full color covers of the Adam Forepaugh Circus lithograph that appeared on the November-December 1973 issue of the *Bandwagon* were printed extra.

These have not been folded and are available at \$1.00 each postage included. They will make wonderful framed pieces for your wall. As a bonus a reprint of the Forepaugh full color litho used on the 1965 Christmas *Bandwagon* will be included with each order.

Send your check or money to *Bandwagon Magazine*, 2515 Dorset Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43221.

### WINTER CIRCUS SPECIAL

- 24 issues of BANNER LINE, World's Only Twice-A-Month Circus Publication
- 24 routes including 1923 Cole Bros.
- 24 (8 x 10s)
- 7 Circus tickets
- 1 RBBB 1972 color brochure
- 1 RBBB 1969 color brochure (4 pages)
- 1 color postcard 4 x 6 of 40 horse hitch
- 1 color postcard of Dolphin Tab
- All for \$11 postpaid from

VAN MATRE  
3328 "H" St., Phila., Pa., 19134





C. A. "Red" Sonnenberg during a visit to the Circus World Museum.

## CARL AUGUST SONNENBERG

CHS member C. A. "Red" Sonnenberg died on December 15, 1973, at the age of 75, following a brief illness. Red was at the home of his son Charles in Prophetstown, Illinois, at the time of his death.

Sonnenberg was born on April 10, 1898, in Kenosha, Wisconsin. He was a 31 year member of the Showman's League of America and a long time member of the Showfolks of Sarasota.

Red's lifetime in outdoor show business covered such shows as Sells-Floto, Lee Bros. Floyd King's Gentry Bros., Buck Jones Wild West, Russell Bros. Pan Pacific, Clyde Beatty & Russell Bros., plus many years of service with the Ringling Brothers & Barnum and Bailey Combined Shows, where he was the on-the-road program manager.

He had long held a card in the stage hands union and like many other circus people worked the winter season as a theatre stage hand.

Following his retirement from the circus business he had traveled with a number of touring opera, musical and arena type shows, often listed on the company roster as Master Carpenter, he found his activities reaching far beyond this special job. He was so well liked by some of the foreign military units that he traveled with, he was made an honorary member of the unit.

Red Sonnenberg was a most unusual person, one who showed great compassion, on the surface always playing the role of a rough show bum, but underneath a kind hearted understanding man, with great warmth and love. His continuing lifetime friendships with hundreds of people in many walks of life extended from small time grifters to famous theatre people who he "looked after" while on concert tours. They were all "gunsels" to him. Red probably had a greater knowledge of the where abouts of more retired show people than any other person. An avid letter writer, he kept a running correspondence with hundreds of people, often chiding people for not answering his letters.

In recent years he traveled about the country visiting friends and circuses. A very close friend Theo Forstall died a few months ahead of Red. His wife Mildred preceded him in 1971.

Sonnenberg was a great booster of the Circus World Museum and was responsible for many collections being sent to the Baraboo museum. He visited the Museum many times each season and was of course on hand at the Milwaukee parade, where he was the official host to visiting showmen.

Sonnenberg served as a resource for many *Bandwagon* articles, drawing on his memory and records for facts about circuses and circus people of the past.

Red has left us here on this grassy lot, but joins his many pals who moved on to the next stand in the old showman's heaven ahead of him.

## JOHN M. STALEY

CHS member John M. Staley died on November 28, 1973, in Sarasota, Florida.



John M. Staley poses with the cook-house display at the Ringling Museum of the Circus, in Sarasota.

Staley had spent his life serving food to circus people.

He started with the Ringling-Barnum circus in the Bridgeport, Conn. winter quarters. He detailed his memories and experiences on the quarters in the 1920s in a *Bandwagon* article. Another article concerned the liquor raid on the R-B train when it came out of Canada during prohibition. Both of these were from a book he had written concerning his life in the circus business.

During the 1920s he was private chef to John Ringling and Charles Ringling, in their winter homes and on their boats.

John Staley ranked with the great circus stewards of all time. In addition to having charge of the Ringling Barnum cook house he served with many other shows, and his special July 4th menus were a tradition. He last served on the Beatty-Cole show, and spent recent years in retirement in Sarasota, where he contributed recipes from his circus cook book to the local paper.

## 1973 CIRCUS KIRK ROUTE BOOK

Personnel, statistics, daily diary, photos of the 1973 tour.

\$2.00 postpaid

Send check or money order to:

CIRCUS KIRK  
Box 181  
East Berlin, Pa. 17316

## PHOTOS PHOTOS PHOTOS

Are You looking for something different? Color photos of Circus Posters from my collection. These are 3½ x 5 inch in size and are in sets of 20. At present I have 12 different sets available. Price is \$7.00 a set postpaid. Descriptive list .25 or list and sample photo .50.

WILLIAM WATSON  
3522 R. Willow Ave.  
Castle Shannon, Pa. 15234





# THE BILL GRIFFITH STORY

by Jim Lackore

## PART ONE FROM CIRCUS FAN TO CIRCUS OWNER

From circus fan to circus owner, Bill Griffith is a man who made a dream come true — and his recent "big top" adventures have added another chapter to the glorious history of the circus in America.

Originating in Appleton, Wisconsin, the Griffith shows trouped mid-America from 1957 to 1965—inscribing the Griffith name on that long list of illustrious "sawdust" greats who have had their circus roots in Badger soil.

Circus fans from Wisconsin to Texas and from Indiana to Utah will remember the several names by which the Griffith shows were known. It was the Adams Brothers Circus in 1957-58. In 1959 the show went out as the Adams Brothers Circus and Seils Brothers World Toured Shows Combined. The 1960 title was shortened to the Adams and Sells Circus — and there was no show in 1961. In 1962-63 it was the Sells Brothers Circus with Bill and "Little Bob" Stevens as partners in the enterprise. The partnership was dissolved at the end of the 1963 season and in 1964-65 Bill went out alone under the Birnam Brothers Circus title.

The 1965 season was Bill's last year as a showman. In 1966 the Birnam title and part of the show's equipment was leased to Richard Johnson and Louie R. McNeece, but the effort soon collapsed and the Birnam Brothers Circus was no more. However, from "first-of-May" to "three-ring-display," the Bill Griffith story is now a part of recent American circus history.

Bill's fascination with the circus began in earnest back in 1952 when, as a young man of 23, he, and his fellow JCs of Appleton, Wisconsin, booked the RBBB Circus into town. (Wasn't that the only year that "The

The second letterhead used by Bill Griffith was this one introduced in the spring of 1958. The scroll work and circus is in gold, banner across the top is red and Adams Bros. is in black. Pfening Collection.


Big One" used sponsors?) Bill recalls that he spent the entire day on the Ringling-Barnum lot, talking with the show's personnel and becoming caught up in the excitement. It wasn't long before he was making new friends — circus fans — and joining CFA and CHS. In the years that followed, he spent nearly every moment he could spare from his family's printing business following his favorite shows and becoming acquainted with their owners and performers. He discovered that he liked the smaller shows and he remembers with fond memories titles of the 1950's such as Hagen Brothers, Kelly-Morris, Ring Brothers, Al G. Kelly-Miller Brothers and Clark and Walters.

Dolores Griffith recalls how the show folks, when in town, would gather at the Griffith home. And how could she forget her honeymoon which was spent with the Hagen Brothers Circus as they toured through Arkansas? "Dolores wasn't quite as 'hep' to it as I was, at the time," Bill remembers, "but she was willing to come along and become interested."

By 1957 the urge to really be a part of the "spangled" action was irresistible. In the autumn of that year, Bill and Dolores

This small flyer was used by the show in the spring of 1958 during its indoor tour. The May 5, 1958 date was Logansport, Ind.

**ABSOLUTELY THE ONLY BIG CIRCUS COMING THIS YEAR!**



**3 RINGS**  
**20 FEATURE ACTS**  
**6 TRAINED ANIMAL ACTS**  
**CONGRESS OF CLOWNS**  
**TV and MOVIE STARS IN PERSON**

**ADAMS BROS. CIRCUS**

**ONE DAY ONLY — 2 PERFORMANCES**  
**4:00 & 8:00 p.m. DOORS OPEN ONE HOUR EARLY**  
**Spon. by Cass County Crippled Childrens Society**

**MON. MAY 5**

**BERRIE BOWL GYM LOGANSPORT**

**"LITTLE BERTA" America's Foremost Performing Baby Elephant**

**AERIAL ARTISTS • WIRE WALKING WONDERS**  
**AMAZINGLY ACCOMPLISHED ANIMAL ACTORS**

**Western Revue** TRICK SHOOTING • ROPING • WHIPS  
AS SEEN ON "MAVERICK"  
"WYATT EARP," "CHEYENNE"  
"GUNSMOKE," "WILD BILL HICKOK"

**Bring the Whole Family!** ADULT Admission 90¢



framed an indoor show that went out for a six week season. They played company Christmas parties and called it the Holiday Circus Review. They also played some sponsor dates under the Adams Brothers Circus title. They opened on November 10th in the Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, Highway Garage and from then until Christmas they travelled throughout the Fox River Valley region and down into Illinois.

A Holiday Circus Review flyer described the fledgling exhibition as "a full one hour Christmas show featuring stars of the Big Top — formerly with such shows as Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Circus." The flyer goes on to note that the show included "TV stars of such shows as Super Circus, Ed Sullivan Show, Sealtest Big Top and Circus Time." The talent included most of the performers who were to go out with the Adams Brothers Circus the following season.

A unique attraction of that first effort were the miniature "spec" floats built around a Mother Goose theme. They were creatively designed and beautifully decorated — but, as Bill admits, "they were not circus engineered." The charming little floats were not built to take the rough treatment which is normal to the circus routine.

In looking back on that early winter of 1957, Bill notes that "business wasn't great, but it was good. It wasn't so much the financial aspect of it at that point — it was just so heady. 'By God,' we told ourselves, 'we've got a circus.' It was our circus."

"Until that point," Bill remembers, "my wife had given her consent to *only* a six week show." Both, however, were encouraged by their successful beginning. And so, charged with enthusiasm, Bill made his decision. The talent was re-hired for a full season and the Griffiths plunged into the planning for the year ahead.

The fortunes of a circus owner seem to swing from peak to trough and back — rather regularly — without much of a pause in the middle. That was the way it was for the Adams Brothers in 1958. The show began playing indoor and ball park dates. By June it had switched to a wild west show-type canopy. It ended the season under a tent. The troupe suffered through 22 straight days of rain and no business in Iowa. Later, in Wisconsin and Minnesota, business was great and the show recovered. Then the run through the Dakotas and Nebraska was a financial disaster and Adams Brothers was forced to close six weeks early. Finally, back in Green Bay, an



**The show moved outdoors in the middle of the 1958 tour, using a canopy over the seats, wild west style. The elephant is Berta. Author's Collection.**

amazing one day stand filled the cash box and put it all in the black again.

However, all of this was in the future — and mercifully, perhaps, out of mind — when the little show rolled out of Appleton and headed south for its opening date on April 25, 1958 in the Manitowac, Wisconsin, Fairgrounds Armory. The equipment, painted a gleaming white with multi-colored lettering, included a panel-type advance truck (complete with fake calliope pipes), a van-type office truck which pulled the cook-house, a concession truck and an elephant van. Later in the season, when the show went under canvas, a generator truck and a canvas and seat truck were added to the caravan.

During the winter, Jenda Smaha, clown and aspiring animal trainer, had convinced Bill that the show needed an elephant. So, an eight year old female was purchased for \$3500.00 from the F. C. Zeehandler Import Company. "We picked her up from the Zoo in Raleigh, North Carolina," Bill remembers. "She was raw and unbroken." On the way back to Appleton the rented truck in which she was being transported overturned. Fortunately, she was not injured.

Bertha, as the elephant was named, prompted some good preseason publicity — including a feature story in *The Milwaukee Journal*. (Bertha remained with the Griffiths until 1960, when she was sold to the Circus World Museum in Baraboo. Later, the Museum sold her to the Sparks Casino in Reno, Nevada, where she still performs.)

**This photo taken near the end of the 1958 season shows the Adams Bros. convoy, lined up to move to the next town. Author's Collection.**

The Adams Brothers Circus began the 1958 season with the following staff: W. A. Griffith, Co-owner and Appleton Office Manager; Evelyn Griffith, Assistant Appleton Office Manager; Bill Griffith, General Manager; Dolores Griffith, Office Manager; Jim Stroud and Vera Himes, Contracting Agents; Bozo Cooper, Press Agent; Bob Couls, Concession Manager; George Bell, diner; Marie Loter, organist; George Gottfried, drummer; George Bell, trumpet; Henry Thompson, Side-show Manager; and Larry Carleton, Painter.

Booking for the show was done by Bill, Bob Couls, John Doyle, Jake Rosenheim and Joe Murray. Twelve phone crews were used.

The talent included: Jenda Smaha, Equestrian Director and elephant handler; Tex and Arkie Carleton, skating and western acts; Mary Lou Carleton, single trap, swinging ladder and web; Patty Couls, dogs; Eddie and Bet Frisco, tight-wire; Eddie Frisco, slack-wire and comedy car; Wenester and Priscilla Townsend, juggling; Wenester Townsend, tight-wire; The Jordan Brothers, trampoline; and The Barcardies, Tumbler.

Clown Alley included Archie Silverlake, Jenda Smaha, Bozo Cooper, Billy Griffin and Eddie Frisco.

Blonda Ward, the animal trainer, died the day before the show left quarters and so E. L. McCall, with his ponies, dogs and bears, was hired on.

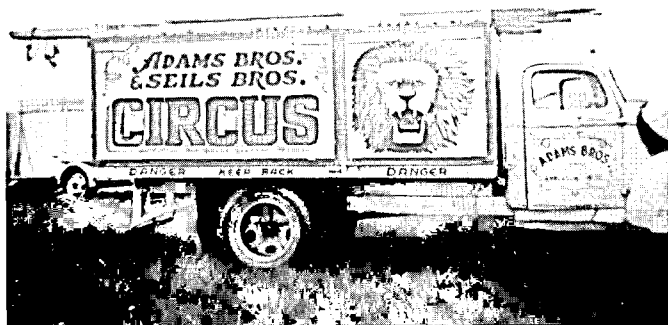
In an ad appearing that spring, in *Billboard*, the Adams Brothers Circus was billed as: "Presenting an hour and one-half of circus entertainment, indoors or in stadiums or ball parks. 20 feature acts; 3 rings; 6 trained animal acts."

The music, Bill remembers, was traditional circus fare.

As the show left Wisconsin and moved into Illinois, indoor and stadium bookings became increasingly hard to get. So, Bill







The 1959 season saw a title change and an outstanding paint job on all of the trucks. Pfening Collection.

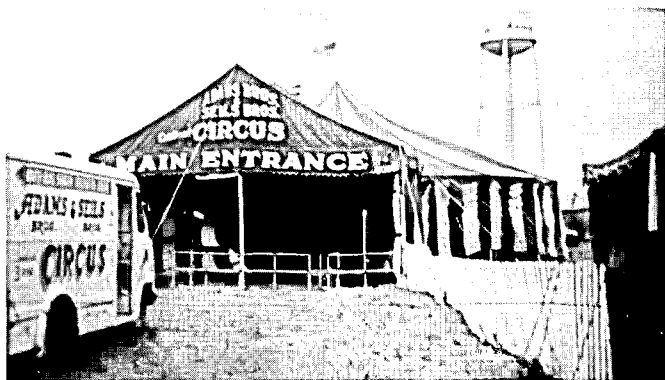
bought a used wild west show-type canopy from "an old Indiana mudshowman" (as Bill remembers him) and the show continued on. Bill jokes about that ragged piece of canvas; "It was about 120 feet long and about 10 feet wide."

The show turned west and moved on through Iowa (rain and no business) and then jumped from Council Bluffs, Iowa back to Eau Claire, Wisconsin. (Check that on your map.) A "dipsy-doodle" swing around Wisconsin, the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and out through Minnesota and Eastern North Dakota was successful. "It was nothing but business," Bill recalls.

As the show moved west through the Dakotas, however, the heat increased and the crowd sizes decreased. In Wahpeton, North Dakota, it was 120 degrees in the shade and there were three "towners" in the matinee audience. Then, sometime during the first week of August, when the show was on the lot at Devil's Lake, N.D., a "blow-down" occurred. "One hellofa storm came up," Bill recalls, "and it blew away the sorry remains of the sorry canvas."

But it wasn't over, yet, for Adams Brothers. Bill was learning each day, and his freshly acquired experience combined with his natural acumen provided him with the foresight and good judgment necessary

The new marquee with stripped big top made the show sparkle on the lot in 1959. Pfening Collection.



The bannerline of the side show is pictured here in 1959. Pfening Collection.

ing. "After that," Bill modestly recalls, "we were well again."

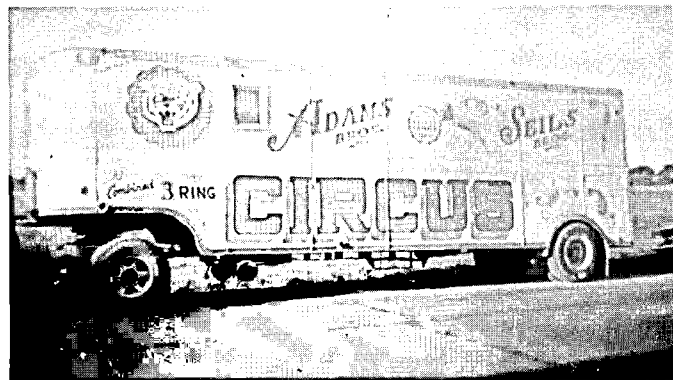
## PART TWO

### 1959-60 — THE UP AND DOWN YEARS

Bill Griffith's Adams Brothers and Seils Brothers World Toured Shows Combined opened the 1959 season at Mexico, Missouri on April 25th. An April 27th editorial in the *Mexico Evening Ledger* gave Bill and his show one of the finest compliments imaginable. "What injures the circus business in this country?" the writer asked. "It is the show that high-pressures businessmen into buying tickets, hi-jacks the public into paying for reserve seats and some other forms of gyp . . ." However, the editorial continues, "We are glad to report that the show was first class in every particular. Not as big as Ringlings, but a good circus. Plenty of wholesome entertainment at a fair price. No high pressure. No gyps and the show operated with the idea of pleasing the public, not milking it. Give them their money's worth, respect yourself and your customers. That is what Bill Griffith is . . . doing."

This was the reputation that Bill worked hard to maintain throughout his circus career. That his shows were always honest, clean and of the highest quality is confirmed by the testimonials of many satisfied

The attractive lettering in 1959 is shown on this semi. Pfening Collection.





sponsors. In his memorabilia can be found a sheaf of letters from sponsors which contain comments such as: "One aspect which impressed us was the fact that there was no gambling or indecent shows connected with the circus." (1963) Another read: "I know that occasionally you must run into prospective sponsors that can't believe that a circus can be run as honestly as yours; and I want you to have this letter — and any 'doubting Thomas's' can call me for verification." (1962) Still another sponsor wrote: "Our friends and neighbors, who attended the circus, were loud in their praise for the excellent performance which was presented." (1959)

Bill used this reputation in his promotional pitches. His heralds and newspaper advertisements proclaimed his show as "America's cleanest circus" offering "good, clean entertainment for the entire family, at a reasonable price." This was his promise: "I want to offer this personal guarantee of high class entertainment, honest dealings, clean operations; and my pledge to allow absolutely no gambling or objectionable features with this show, now or ever." He emphasized that "never does this circus depend on sex or smut for patronage, thrills or laughs."

Looking back, Bill remembers 1959 as "a good year — all the way around." It was the year of the highly successful tour of suburban and neighborhood Chicago. (The Adams-Seils show was the first to play the city of Chicago neighborhoods since Gentry Brothers in 1913.) It was also the year of the classic opposition duel with the Cristiani Brothers at Green Bay and Appleton, Wisconsin. All things considered, 1959 was perhaps the most exciting and memorable year of Bill's circus days.

The equipment left winter quarters on the Tony Wickesberg farm near Appleton and was taken to the fairgrounds at Mexico, Missouri. There the show was framed and opened. That year Adams-Seils went out with an 80 foot round with three 40 foot middles. The "big top" seated 3400 people on 30 sections of 10-high blues and 12 sections of 6-high reserves. Four new trucks were added: spool, stringer and jack, pole and concession trucks. The previous season's concession truck was converted into a second bill truck. Through the 1960 season, most of Bill's trucks were International-Harvester.

The spool truck was of special interest in that it was built to suspend the canvas spool between two arms which were supported by screw jacks. The truck was designed by Bill and his staff and the idea was to lower the center of gravity and increase the stability of the vehicle when in motion. Bill believes that it was the first one of its kind. It worked well, with the exception of the time later in the season when someone forgot to raise the screw jacks after the spool was loaded. It wasn't until several miles down the road that the driver smelled burning canvas and discovered that the rear wheels had worn holes through several layers of the "big top."

The April 6th, *Billboard* announced that the Adams-Seils Circus would begin the 1959 season with the following staff: Bill Griffith, General Manager; Dolores Griffith, Office Manager; Vera Himes, General Agent; George Penny and Raymond Duke, Contracting Agents; Jimmy Ray, Press; Raymond Duke, Brigade Manager; Nora Cussan, short banners; Jenda Smaha, concessions; Walter Phillips, Boss Concessman; Billy Griffin, Purchasing Agent; Lee Bradley, side show; Dale Madden, Equestrian Director; Larry Carlton, painter; Cliff Cowen, snake pit; Dale Madden, gorilla pit; Kay Aegan, concert; and Jack Wright, front door.

The same article noted that the talent for the year would include: the Dale Madden families, manage horses, chimp, dogs, monkey, ladders, perch-pole, whips, organ and drums; E. L. McCall, huskie and riding dogs, pony drills, bears and pick-out pony; Dot and Sonny Burdette, foot juggling, rolling globe and slack wire; Mary Lou Carlton, aerial displays; The Carlton Family, whips and skating; Kay Aegan, manage horses; Hazel Bradley, dogs and manage horse; Jenda Smaha, elephant trainer; and Billy Griffin, producing clown.

After opening in Missouri, the show moved north through the St. Louis area and up to the Chicago suburbs where, according to a report in the May 18th *Billboard*, "Adams and Seils got the jump on suburban booking" during the winter and "tied up many towns before many other shows looked this way." The article went on to note that the following shows were also scheduled into the Chicago area that year: RBBB and Polack, Mills, Cristiani, Hagen and Harold Brothers.

Bill's winter planning had paid off — the Chicago business was outstanding. At Niles, Illinois, he had the biggest advance sales — \$13,000 — that any of his shows ever had. On June 1st, *Billboard* reported that Adams and Seils had played to a "straw house" at Elgin, Illinois on Thursday, May 21st. On Friday, May 22nd, the show moved into the Chicago neighborhoods and played that day on the 3960 North Rockwell Street lot to a near-capacity matinee and a three-quarter house in the rain that night.

The next two days — Saturday and Sunday, May 23rd and 24th — were particularly memorable. By this time Adams and Seils had reached a peak of morale and momentum. They were prepared to meet almost any obstacle — and the Fullerton and Sheffield Avenue lot rose up to test that readiness. They arrived on the scene that Saturday morning, greeted by a field of water and mud. It had rained hard and steadily that day and night before, and the show and staff were soaked through and through from the drenching tear-down just hours earlier. Nevertheless, they set to work. Through the help of their sponsor — the Lincoln Park Conservation Club (whose contract with the circus had been signed by Adlai Stevenson, Jr.) — the Chicago Fire Department was brought in to pump out the flooded lot. All hands pitched in

and the matinee went on only one hour late. Four shows were given during those two days, with a packed house each time.

Before leaving the "Windy City," the show acquired "Hungry" the lion. Earlier in the year, the animal had been purchased from R. A. Miller of Pigeon Forge, Tenn. Miller had shipped the lion to Chicago with an incomplete address attached to his cage. After a few days in the REA Depot, the Chicago Humane Society took up the search for the animal's owner and ran a picture and story in *The Chicago Tribune*. Bill saw the article and hurried down to claim his lion. When he arrived, he found that the poor creature had not eaten for

**The heated opposition between the Adams-Seils Circus and the Cristiani show in 1959 was highlighted by the day and date of the two shows in Green Bay, Wisconsin on July 20. Pfening Collection.**

**Approval for Film**  
SANTA MONICA, Calif. — A bill to allow the state of California to use its own money to pay for the production of a film, passed the state assembly today.

**Rock Singer Wins**  
The singer was selected by a jury of 100 judges from 100,000 entries in the "Rock Song" contest.

**Three Boys, One Adult and Scout Troops Share Reward**  
MILWAUKEE, Wis. — Three boys and one adult were named as recipients of a \$100 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of a man who had been charged with the murder of a woman.

**It's The One BIG SHOW GREEN BAY**  
CITY STADIUM PARKING LOT  
MON. 2 P.M.  
JULY 20 8 P.M.

**CRISTIANI BROS.**  
WORLD'S LARGEST  
KALEIDOSCOPIC  
MARDI GRAS  
THE GREATEST ARRAY OF INTERNATIONAL CIRCUS STARS EVER ASSEMBLED  
General Admission — Adults \$1.00, Children 50c  
Inexpensive Ticket Office at Newmarket  
(Open House Day Only)

**ADAMS BROS.**  
AND  
**SEILS BROS.**  
3 RINGS  
The WORLD'S FINEST FAMILY CIRCUS  
COMBINED  
**CIRCUS**  
Under the BIG TOP  
Acres and Acres of Canvas  
2 Full and Complete Performances  
Rain or Shine, 2:30 and 8:00 P.M.  
Why Pay So Much More  
WHEN  
ADAMS BROS.  
AND SEILS BROS.  
GUARANTEE  
LOW FAMILY PRICES  
Adults ..... 90c  
Children ..... 60c  
No Reserved Seats  
All Seats One Price  
You Pay No More  
Sit anywhere . . . 3400 seats. See all 3 rings.  
Bring the whole family to the World's Finest  
Family Circus for the PRICE OF A SINGLE  
TICKET TO ANY OTHER SIMILAR SHOW.  
Don't Be Disappointed  
THE SHOW  
FOR YOUR MONEY  
is at the  
**FAIRGROUNDS MONDAY**

**WHY ?**  
**PAY MORE ?**  
Do not be misled by extravagant and exaggerated advertising claims which may be used to justify exorbitant and inflated prices by shows that claim immense size.

**Wisconsin's Own Great Circus**  
**Will Positively Show At The**  
**FAIRGROUNDS**  
**MON. JULY 20**  
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days. The beast was ravenous — and that was how he got his name.

After Chicago, the show wound its way through Wisconsin and into Minnesota — stopping for a time to play the Twin Cities suburbs. Here, however, it ran into difficulties with the Minnesota electrical code. And so, because the show could not meet the Gopher State wiring requirements, it jumped back into Wisconsin.

While playing the small, all-white town of Durand, Wisconsin — located in the west-central part of the state — Bill recalls that “we integrated the municipal swimming pool. The townsfolk weren’t too happy about it, but we did it anyway.”

The 1959 season was filled with many highlights, but certainly the opposition clash with the Cristianis had to be the biggest event of the year. The struggle took place when both shows played on Monday, July 30th at Green Bay and on Tuesday, July 31st at Appleton. Perhaps Adams-Seils had the advantage — the battle took place on their home territory. They also had the traditional circus lots in both towns. But Cristiani Brothers was a much bigger outfit, and they were at the height of their fame and fortune. For weeks before the shows arrived, their billing crews had engaged in an old-fashioned paper war. The stage was set — and here is the story in Bill Griffith’s own words:

“We found out about three or four weeks ahead of time that Cristiani Brothers was going to day and date us in Green Bay. Obviously, Paul, Lucio and Pete [Cristiani] expected us to forget about it — to acknowledge their size and superiority — and kind of quietly sneak away. They thought that we would play our date in silence to no people — and we refused to do that.”

“That was at the height of my love affair with the circus, and also I had been in the business long enough to start to gain some expertise. So, we decided that — no siree, Msrs. Cristianis — if you do that to us, anybody else in the business will do it and not respect our dates. We kept the date — and we ‘womped’ ‘em.”

“Then we found out that they were playing Appleton the next day. [Appleton is

**The show’s lone elephant was advertised on the bull truck, the title of the show was not mentioned. Author’s Collection.**

about 30 miles south of Green Bay.] So, we changed our route to jump in on them — just to show that we were not afraid.”

“We kept an extra press agent and bill crew in Green Bay for three weeks ahead of time. We billed it, and when Cristiani covered our paper, we covered theirs the next day. After about three go-arounds of this, it ended up that we agreed with Cristiani to side-by-side the billing stands. They took half and we took half. Every place there was Cristiani paper, there was also Adams-Sells paper. We hit them sheet for sheet. We didn’t care if they covered us — we were going to cover them. And if they weren’t going to cover us, we weren’t going to cover them. We used 10 times our normal order of bills.” *Billboard* reported that “opposition centered in newspaper ads, but outdoor billing was heavy. In both towns, Cristiani billers were strongest in the main business districts and Adams was strongest in the neighborhood areas.”

“In the newspapers, whatever size ad Cristiani placed, we placed a bigger one,” Bill remembers. Again, *Billboard* account of the event noted that the Adams’ ad asked “why pay more?” and they stressed its prices of 60 and 90 cents with no reserved seats. Cristiani announced itself as the “only big show coming.”

“And so,” Bill enthusiastically recalls, “we had an old-fashioned billing war between our little ‘one elephant show’ and the second largest circus in the country.”

He continues: “The Cristianis and Ben Davenport all came over to visit the show that Monday morning — to see what they were going to skunk really looked like. And, of course, we went over to their show to see what a real, genuine circus looked like. Later, about one-half hour after the shows started that afternoon, Pete Cristiani and others of that show’s management drove over again to our lot. As they drove up, there were three to four thousand people milling around under the trees there on the Green Bay Fairgrounds. Pete came up

to me and asked, ‘What’s the matter? Can’t you get this show started? Aren’t you up? Can’t you get them in?’ And I took him over to the back door and showed him the ‘straw house’ up to the ring curbs. Those people outside, I told him, were waiting for the next show.”

Altogether, Bill estimates that at Green Bay “we showed to about 13,000 people and the Cristianis showed to maybe 7-8,000.” The *Billboard* story noted that: “Adams had a turn-away afternoon and about half a house for an extra afternoon show, while at night it pulled a ‘straw house.’ Cristiani had a reported two-thirds house in the afternoon and a three-quarters at night.”

When the two shows moved on to Appleton, the *Billboard* reported that: “Cristiani had a light afternoon and a three-quarter night. Adams played to a turn-away afternoon with half a house on hand for an extra show, plus a ‘straw house’ at night.”

Bill summarizes his feelings about that thrilling experience with the following comment: “We just got lucky and came up on their blind side. But I’m still proud of it, because that was, I think, the first time the rest of the circus world knew Bill Griffith existed.”

The Cristiani Circus was not the only show that Adams-Seils tangled with that year. In August, Bill exchanged successive towns and days (Spooner and Rice Lake, Wisconsin) with Kelly-Miller. “Let me tell you,” Bill remembers, “that the Kelly-Miller show were people who really understood opposition. But we did them to a draw. We had as many people as they did both days.”

Later, as Adams-Seils worked its way back into northern Illinois, Bill discovered that he was going to play Fox Lake two

**Jenda Smaha is pictured as he led “Little Bertha” from her semi in 1959. Beardsley Collection.**





weeks after his good friend, Joe McMahon, manager of the Hagen Brothers. "I was real 'hep' on opposition by that time," Bill recalls. "That was more fun than anything else." So, he went into Fox Lake with "wait for the big one" paper. When Hagen Brothers arrived in town, McMahon "blew his top." "We were the best of friends," says Bill, "but I did it just for fun."

However, McMahon may have had the best laugh. Ray Duke, the Adams bill poster, made the mistake of driving his truck onto the Hagen lot and accepting McMahon's gracious invitation to watch the matinee. While Ray was enjoying himself inside the tent, some of Joe's men were outside going over his truck with paint. When Ray saw what had happened, he hurried to the nearest store, purchased several cans of lighter fluid, and tried to remove the fresh, gleaming white coating that was covering all of Larry Carlton's fine work. "Ray thought I would be furious," Bill humorously recalls.

The show spent the remainder of the season in the Chicago area, closing during the third week of October. Much of the equipment was placed in storage at Plano, Illinois, and while Bill and his wife went to California for a vacation, Bob Couls framed a smaller show with some of the equipment and talent and headed south. Running into financial difficulties, he closed just outside of Texarkana and then jumped to Van Buren, Arkansas, where the rest of the gear was put into storage in a small, rented barn. The 1959 season had come to an end.

Tom Parkinson reviewed the 1960 Adams and Sells performance in the May 30th edition of the *Billboard*. He wrote: "The

**This unusual photo shows the erecting of the push-pole big top used by the Adams-Sells show in 1959. Beardsley Collection.**



**The Adams Bros. Circus spool wagon was unlike any other on the road. It is shown, loaded, in 1959. Pfening Collection.**

performance has several strong features," including "one of the best single-elephant acts." He added that the show had introduced an unusual twist — the calliope was used to play the entire show. Parkinson went on to note that Adams and Sells was playing more Chicago and suburban stands that season than any since Gentry and Harris Nickle Plate, and he commended the management for using a questionnaire which was left with each sponsor to determine what people thought about the show. Finally, he observed that the show had played in mud and cold weather for the past three weeks. In the end, his observation was indeed an ominous one — for the bad weather start seemed to set the tone for the remainder of the season.

Bill Griffith began the 1960 season with enthusiasm. He was looking forward to another great year. The show equipment was essentially the same, although the "big top" had been rebuilt. The big, new attraction which was added was a free menagerie. During the winter, Marv Gauger had spent his spare hours building 50 small animal cages. Now with the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Marv then was employed by the Oshkosh, Wisconsin Fire Department. Dedicated circus fans and good friends of Bill and Dolores. Marv, and his wife Ollie, spent many of their vacations travelling with the Griffith shows. The cages were filled with a lion (Hungry), bears and an assortment of smaller animals collected from the fields and woods of Wisconsin. Included were several young rabbits given to the Griffith children by the "Easter Bunny." The show herald described the menagerie as: "Cage after cage of imported and domestic animals on exhibition on the circus grounds — free — one hour before and after every performance."

Rides for the kids on Bertha the elephant — a popular attraction from previous years — was continued in 1960. And Bill's genuine concern for children and their interest in the circus was illustrated in a very special way that year. Reading in the newspapers about a young lady and her plans for a backyard circus to raise money for a charitable cause, Bill wrote a letter to her and

said: "I'm always interested in young people who express their fondness for the circus this way, because I, too, had my first circus in our back yard some 20 odd years ago. I was also glad to see that your circus was for charity, as big circuses like ours also help worthy causes." He went on to invite the girl and her friends to be the guests of Adams and Sells when the show came to their town and to join in the Grand Entry, wearing their circus costumes. Bill also told her that he would like to present to her — in the center ring — the Adams and Sells contribution to Care "to help you carry on the good work you have begun."

The April 18th, 1960 issue of *Billboard* listed the staff: Bill Griffith, General Manager; Dolores Griffith, Office Manager; George Penny, General Superintendent and Assistant Manager; Jenda Smaha, concessions; Red Maynard, Boss Canvassman; Walt Rice, transportation and electrician; Pauline Penny, wardrobe; Dick Johnson, snake pit; Dan Gillette, pony ride; Vera Himes, General Agent; George Lilly, Contracting Agent; Jimmy Ray, Press and Special Agent; Ann Frey, pie car and cook; and Raymond Duke, billing.

The *Billboard* listed the following talent for the year: Billy Sheets, Equestrian Director and bears; Bob Green, calliope; Dot and Sonny Burdette and Dick and Mavis Johnson, juggling, etc.; Ruby and Naomi Haag, dogs, ponies, web and neck rope; Tony and Ingo Smaha, whip and liberty and dressage horses; Jenda Smaha, elephant trainer; Pauline Penny, swinging ladder; Eddie and Inez Santiago, rozenback horses; Don Floyds, tightwire and revolving ladder; Don Gillette, goats; E. L. McCall, assorted animals; and the Cecil Edingtons, the Whitesides and O'Donnell Duo, clowns.

Adams and Sells opened April 24 at Monett, Missouri. From there it followed nearly the same route as it did the year before — north through St. Louis and into the Chicago area. After 22 days in the city of Chicago — nearly all of them plagued with difficulties and financial loss — the show limped up into Wisconsin, where it went broke and closed in mid-season.

Bill remembers that: "Everything that was right in 1959 was wrong in 1960. The tenor of the season was wrong. The advanced sales in Chicago were not what they were the year before. Business was not



what it was the year before. It rained — and everything was mud."

It was the Chicago run — so successful in 1959 — that struck the fatal blow in 1960. Going into the Southside neighborhoods, the show found permits hard to obtain. Bill believes that permits were not a problem the previous year because the show had more influential sponsors. The 1960 sponsors "were good people who helped out all they could," Bill notes, but they didn't seem to have the necessary "clout" with the people at City Hall. The show made its dates, but Bill estimates that the daily "shake" amounted to more than \$1,000.00. "We had to get out of Chicago," Bill recalls, "because we were losing money badly."

While in Chicago, the show was beset with other problems, too. Gate crashing, rope slashing and brick and stone throwing were common occurrences. It seems that the only bright spot in the entire run was the show's first \$1,000.00 pop-corn day at the 44th and Cottage Grove lot.

Finally, noting the old circus superstition that bad luck always comes in threes, Bill remembers that two of the three more notably unfortunate incidents of the season occurred in Chicago. The first involved Hungry the lion. One night an inebriated woman forced her way past the fence rope and the guard and tried to pet the "nice kitty." She lost an arm to the beast's jaws and a lawsuit followed.

The second incident involved the menagerie. By their standards, the Chicago Humane Society declared that the cages were too small. So, the Society impounded the animals and the cages. Once in their custody, however, the Society officials claimed not to know what to feed the creatures. So, Billy Sheets — the circus's animal man — made up a menu of the finest fare. "I mean, those animals were *well* fed," Bill remembers. When the Society presented Adams and Sells with the bill for all that good grub, the show was on its way across the Illinois-Wisconsin border. And for all we know, Hungry and his friends may still be enjoying the gourmet hospitality of the Chicago Humane Society.



Wisconsin's youngest showman, William Adams Griffith, Jr., cigar and all. Author's Collection.

Within days after the loss of the menagerie, tragedy struck again when a young boy, who was helping to unload the possum belly off the pole truck, accidentally had an eye put out by a carelessly passed metal tent stake.

As the show worked its way north through Wisconsin, the situation went from bad to worse. Sponsors quickly discovered that the show was involved in insurance problems as a result of the two previous accidents involving towners. In Wisconsin Rapids, the sheriff attempted to attach the show for the poster account, but Bill was able to spring that one by talking to Neal Walters, the printer, on the phone. At Marshfield, Wisconsin, the sheriff appeared on the lot again — this time with an order to attach the show for the insurance bill. Bill remembers that, through some quick maneuvering, he got the "fuz" to transfer the attachment to two of the show's trucks — and Adams and Sells moved on to Stevens Point.

At Stevens Point, Wisconsin, a third attempt was made to attach the show. (The "cycle of three" again?) The action was initiated by one of the show's own booking agents — and this time there was no way out. It was the end of the line for the Adams and Sells Circus. On August 12, 1960 it folded and the law attached all the equipment. But even in defeat, Bill and Dolores Griffith recall how they managed to maintain a principle that was always important to them. Before leaving, all the help was paid. Dolores remembers going from trailer to trailer that night, surreptitiously paying the performers with the last of the cash which had been tucked safely away in her purse.

Bill and Dolores returned to Appleton.

Only Bertha — who belonged to the Griffiths, personally, and not to the circus corporation — went with them. Later Bertha was sold to Wilbur Deppe, through the help of Chappie Fox. She spent the next few years performing at the Circus World Museum. It was a sad way to end a season. But it wasn't the end of the sawdust trail for Bill. He would sit out a year — and then plunge back again with that spirit which wells eternally within the breast of every circus devotee. The next show — in 1962 — would be "bigger and better" than ever.

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# Yours in Paste, Francis Kitzman

By Dave Price

There was a time when letters signed in this manner went out to the best billers in the country early each year offering employment, and perhaps adventure, with the advance of a major circus. Kitzman headed up at one time or another the bill cars of nearly a dozen shows. He had a reputation for heavy showings of paper even if devious methods were at times required to achieve those showings. There was a period when he even revived the almost-forgotten opposition techniques of a bygone era. But I'm getting ahead of my story.

To a boy growing up in Minnesota in the early years of this century, there was only one real circus, the Ringling show. Young Francis Kitzman of Rochester had a number of chances to see the best efforts of the Brothers of Baraboo and, like all kids in town, was enamored with the exciting world of elephants, bareback riders, and railroad cars. But above all else, he was fascinated by the work of the men who preceded the big show: the billers who quite literally "wrapped up" the buildings of the town and countryside with beautiful posters depicting the animals, the performers, and even the train itself.

By the spring of '17, Francis could stand it no longer and managed to get himself hired as a biller on the #3 car managed by Charles Snowhill, one of the greats of his day. One factor of life on the road had not been explained too well to Francis. The bill car was not too well heated and sleeping

through those cold blasts of early spring was difficult at best. So after working with the crew in Chicago and St. Louis, the young adventurer turned his sights back toward home.

Uncomfortable as life on the road had been, he missed it greatly and rejoined the car the following spring for an eight-year stint. During those years, Ringling was battling shows right and left and the foot soldiers of all these campaigns were, of course, the advance crew. Kitzman learned well and remembered not only the teachings of Snowhill but the lessons picked up on the day's route.

While billing the opening stand of Chicago in 1926, Kitzman was offered a job on the advance of the Ranch show working under Clyde Willard, one of the legendary opposition car managers. "I guess the main reason I took the job was to see the West Coast," he recalls, "but I really had my work cut out for me: we must have fought half the shows on the road that season."

After that one year of decorating Col. Clint Finney's favorite burgers, Fran decided he had done enough roving and came back to Rochester. Then followed several years when he was "just a townner." A first marriage didn't work out and he remarried a young grass widow named Elsie Myer. Fran's two youngsters and Elsie's one gave them a ready-made family.

By 1931 times had gotten tough around home and the Kitzmans had moved to Chillicothe, Missouri, where Francis had found employment selling Frigidaires. One day, as luck would have it, he spotted some show paper. It was for the little Russell

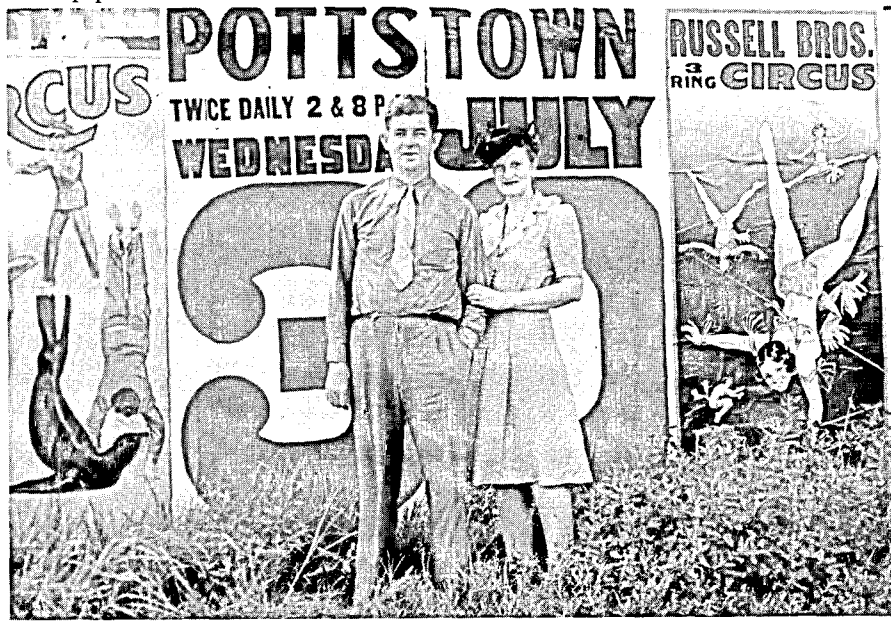
Bros. Circus. This was a three-ring, three-truck, one-elephant affair that Claude and Paulene Webb had trouped for about five years. This year it had come out of North Little Rock and was just about managing to make ends meet.

Francis contacted his old friend Barney Kern, who had the bill crew of the tiny show, and managed to get a couple of passes for himself and Elsie. By the time they visited the show and met the Webbs, Kern was no longer "with it" and the Kitzmans found themselves being offered the bill car. Mrs. Webb said, "We can pay \$50 per week for the both of you, pay your own." Pat Murphy and Glen Booth, the two billers left when Kern vacated the manager's position, were still up ahead but the Webbs feared they would not last.

Fran and Elsie had to do a little thinking about the offer before accepting it. Finally they decided that they could do as well as they had been doing with the Frigidaires. In the final agreement, the Webbs did agree to pay road tolls. So there was Fran, a car manager at last. And Elsie, never having trouped, was now about to set out on her first tour.

Sure enough, the other billers didn't remain and the Kitzmans became the entire crew. On cold nights, they stayed in private homes at \$1, or so; warm nights they slept in the car. Elsie fixed up window curtains and Fran rigged the seat backs to make a

Francis Kitzman is shown with Mary Jane Price, press agent with the Hanneford Circus. Author's Photo.



Francis and Elsie Kitzman are shown in front of their 1941 daubs in Pottstown, Pa. Author's Collection.





bed of sorts when needed. A small baggage trailer was added to carry paper.

Elsie always liked to tell of the experiences of those early days with the Russell show. Like the story of the fellow who didn't realize anyone was asleep in the car and tried to steal a tire. "When Francis got out, the guy took off and I guess he's still running."

That winter, the Russell outfit went into quarters at Rolla, Missouri, for the first time. Rolla was to remain the winter quarters for a number of years.

By working hard and watching the pennies the Kitzmans were able to survive those first few years. One fall, after Russell closed, they went with the advance of Billroy's Comedians under Forrest Brown. That must have been 1933. The following year, they were with the Downie advance after Russell went to the barn. They billed under Lee Conroe there.

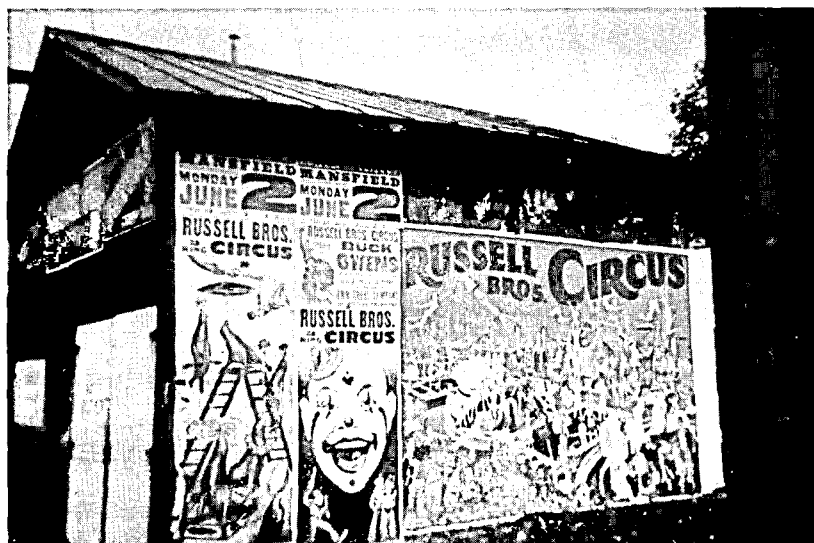
Another winter, the Webbs didn't have the cash to get the show home so they wintered in Donna, Texas, and framed a winter unit to troup the valley under the title, "Rosselli Bros." This change of title was accomplished by the simple expedient of

**The Kitzmans are shown with a special Russell bill in the late 1930s. Note the box on top of their auto used for carrying paper. Author's Collection.**

changing the "u" in Russell to an "o" and adding an "i" at the end. This was a small unit whose purpose was to get the show through the winter. Fran booked and billed this one.

In spite of the depression and other adversities, the Russell show prospered and grew. By 1937, the Webbs fielded a 40-truck organization. Kitzman now operated the advance out of a sleeper-semi and four panel trucks. He remarked at the time that this was the prettiest show he had ever seen. The crew had grown to around a dozen men. Francis was beginning to surround himself with men he could depend upon in the coming years of opposition. As the show grew, it had to battle for better territory to survive. And with this, came other shows wanting the same territory. There was the time, for instance, when the Tom Mix show

**This daub is typical of the Kitzman wall work of the 1940s. Pfening Photo.**



made the brag, "We'll run the Russell show out of Texas." Kitzman's billing reversed the strategy, however, and the hero of the silver screen had to seek greener pastures far away from the Russell show.

Such names as Hoot Gibson, Jules Jacot, and Walter Jennier began to grace the list of Russell performers. This was a long way from the days when Topsy the Chimp had been the feature attraction.

In 1938, the Russell show beat the odds by remaining on the road all season. Recall that it was '38 that defeated almost every other show out. 1939 brought a sad note as "Rubber" the show's first elephant was killed in a wreck. The public didn't notice the loss, however, as the show was now in the big class.

After the 1941 tour, the Webbs decided to winter near Los Angeles in the old Selig Zoo. During the winter, a momentous decision was reached: to play downtown Los Angeles in the spring. Early 1942 saw the Kitzmans with a crew of 25 men working long and hard hours letting the natives of the west coast capital know of the coming of the Russell show. This engagement at Washington and Hill Streets has now become circus history. It can be considered a high point in the history of the show. It was only surpassed by the same date the following year when a record was set by the show for the longest circus engagement in the history of the city. A 17-day success.

No doubt this 1943 triumph was responsible for the coming on the scene of one of the most significant men in modern circus history: Art Concello.

During the '43 season, Concello bought the show from the Webbs and began organizing a mighty show that is still on the road today, although under different ownership and with a different title. One of the first staffers Concello asked to stay was Kitzman.

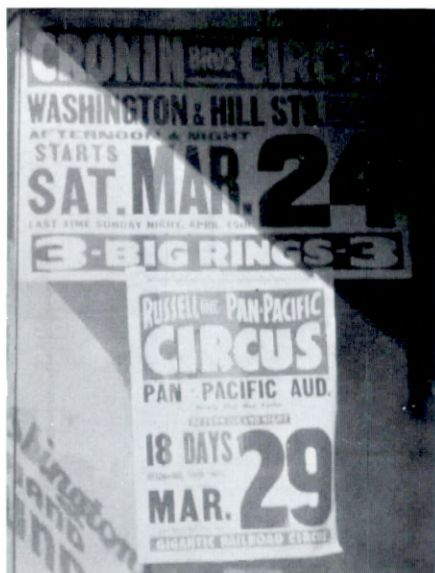
For the Webbs, it was a time of mixed emotions. They had always felt an indebtedness toward Francis and Elsie for sticking with them through the thin years. The \$5,000 bonus that C. W. Webb gave Francis is still talked about on bill cars. There are too many people around who saw the check for the story to be denied.

The story of Concello's role in shaping the Russell show is well known. In 1944 he called it Clyde Beatty-Russell Bros. Combined Circus and featured the famous wild animal trainer. He bought the Beckman and Gerety train and framed a 15-car railroad show for the 1945 season, operating under the Russell Bros. Pan-Pacific title. During these years, Kitzman fought some of his hardest opposition battles.

The Arthur Bros. show gave Fran a lot of trouble. In Los Angeles, the Cronan show fought Russell. It looked like every show out wanted the same territory that Concello wanted.

One spring the Russell show was billing Los Angeles while the Arthur show was playing the date. Remembering the paper wars Kitzman had given them, the Arthur show sent two taxi cabs full of working men





This Bob Taber photo shows the 1945 opposition between the Russell and Cronin shows in Los Angeles at the opening of the 1945 season. Author's Collection.

to find Fran and teach him a lesson. They caught him just as he and an older bill-poster were covering a big Arthur daub with Russell paper. It was probably the worst beating two billers ever had to take. The old man never did recover from the fight and eventually died but Kitzman hobbled around for a few weeks and eventually regained his strength.

Later that season, Fran happened to be in an express office in Washington state picking up Russell paper when he spotted a shipment of Arthur dates in the station. He went back to the bill car and sent another man in to identify himself as the Arthur Bros. representative. In that way they picked up the shipment and dumped it from the ferry boat off Seattle. Concello paid the \$80 express bill without batting an eye. That was the way opposition worked at that time.

In 1946, the Kitzmans left the show to go with C. R. Montgomery who was framing his own circus. This lasted until mid-season 1947 when Montgomery's tents were folded forever. Fran and Elsie finished the season ahead of the Bailey Bros show. Big Bob let his crew go in order to get the Kitzmans.

In 1948, they had an offer to manage the Beatty bill car. This was, of course, the Russell show, now bought by Beatty. Fran continued to manage that car until Sept. of 1949, when he got word his brother Morey had been killed. Kitzman turned the car over to Bill Oliver and went home to help settle his brother's estate.

In 1950, the Kitzmans were again on the advance of a circus. This time Fran was managing the car for the Dailey Show, owned by Ben Davenport. Fran and Ben got along very well. They shared a lot of the same thinking about the show business and Davenport was amused by Kitzman's post-

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Good Only on Day Indicated Below

This 1941 long pass for the Russell Bros. Circus is but one of thousands issued by Francis Kitzman during his long career as an advance advertising man. Pfening Collection.

ing of the Beatty bill car with Dailey paper in Kentucky. Fran says of Ben, "Lots of circus managers wanted to cut the advance down when business was bad; Ben always realized we needed more advertising at these times and had me hire extra men."

In '51, Fran and Elsie were still with Davenport, but this time the title was Campa Bros. For the 1952 season, they had their first experience with a Huero, Oklahoma, show when Fran took the Kelly-Miller car.

Bill Moore of the Beatty show asked Fran and Elsie to come back over there for 1953. Fran managed the Beatty car from 1953 through 1955. That was brought to an end when Kitzman and Moore parted the way. Beatty wanted the Kitzmans back for 1956 but Moore said no, so that was it.

In 1956, Kitzman took the advance for the Arnold Maley unit of the big King Bros. Circus. That show closed early as did Beatty and Ringling. The first thing McClosky and Kernan did on assuming control of the Beatty show in mid-season 1956 was to hire Floyd King as General Agent. So Bill Moore was let out and Kitzmans were asked to return to the Beatty advance. The success of the reopened show that fall must be due, at least in part, to the superb billing Francis and his crew did.

They remained in 1957 when the show converted to trucks. Elsie worked press and Fran managed the car. Due to problems with the billers' union, it was sometimes necessary to list another car manager in *Billboard*, but Fran was manager from August of 1956 through the 1957 season.

Francis and Elsie went back to the Kelly-Miller show for 1958. In Hugo, they got to know Glen J. Jarmes, who hired them for the 1959 tour of the Famous Cole show, of which he had become a partner.

In 1959 Cole advance opened with a crew of five and soon dwindled to three. Herb Walters says in his book that he was tempted to omit reference to the 1959 season of the Famous Cole show. Maybe I should do likewise. To make a long story short, the Kitzmans did leave after repeated difficulties.

Jack Moore asked Fran to take over the Carson-Barnes advance as Bill Wilcox, the manager of the car, had asked to be allowed to go home. Kitzman did take over the Carson-Barnes car that fall, taking the writer with him from the Famous Cole

show. Elsie decided she had had enough of the show business and left for Rochester. While Elsie did visit the car several times during the next few years, she never trouped full time after that. She and Fran spent their winters in Miami and she her summers with relatives in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

The spring of 1964 saw Fran called home from the Carson-Barnes advance as Elsie gave up a long and hard fight against cancer. She was a fine lady and a good trouper. She has been missed by all with whom she worked, including myself.

Francis did put in the 1965 season on the Carson-Barnes advance. This was in the days when Jack Moore was still at the head of that show. He and Fran worked well together. Since retiring, Kitzman has spent time with his daughter in California as well as in Florida and Minnesota. He still keeps framed circus mementoes on his walls and visits every show he can. At 75, he is in good shape except for the occasional difficulties a man his age has to face.

He has lived from the day when a big circus had as many as a hundred billers to the day when the sponsor is shipped fifty window cards and told, "Have one of your members put these out if he gets time." Francis always wanted a heavy showing of paper. I heard Clyde Beatty tell him one time, "I wish you were billing this show; we're just not getting up the paper that you used to get up."

Francis Kitzman, Willis M. Johnson and Dave Price are pictured on the advance of the Carson & Barnes Circus in 1961. Mel Olsen Photo.



RESERVED SEAT CHECK

To be EXCHANGED at MAIN ENTRANCE for One Numbered Seat, ONLY WHEN PRESENTED WITH ADMISSION COUPON

NO RESERVED SEATS HELD AFTER 2 P.M. or 8 P.M.

The Holder Agrees to Accept Such Accommodations as are AVAILABLE.

NO RESERVATIONS MADE IN ADVANCE



# JOHN ROBINSON CIRCUS

## Lithos of the 1920s

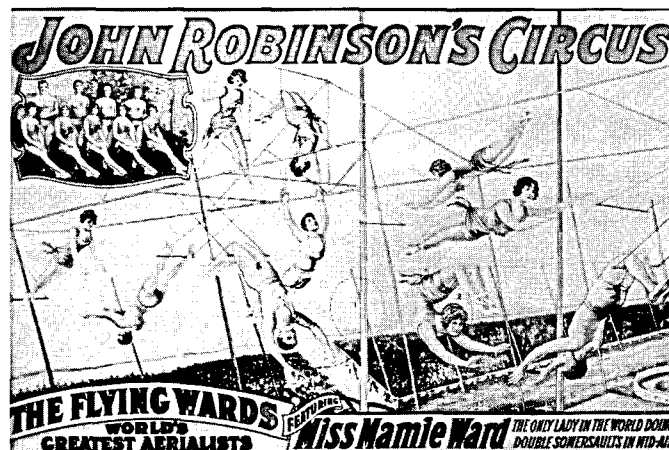
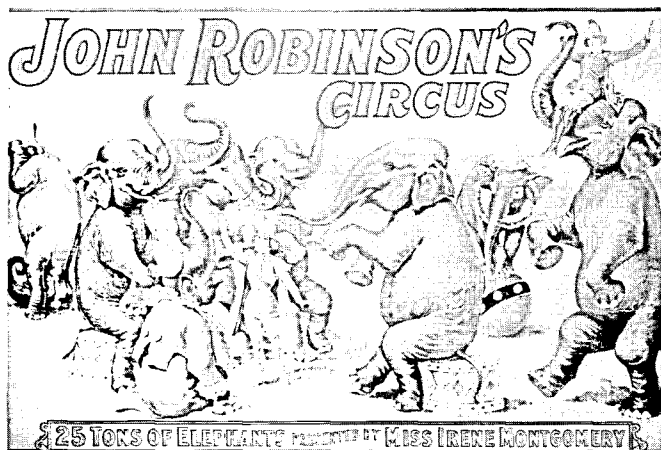
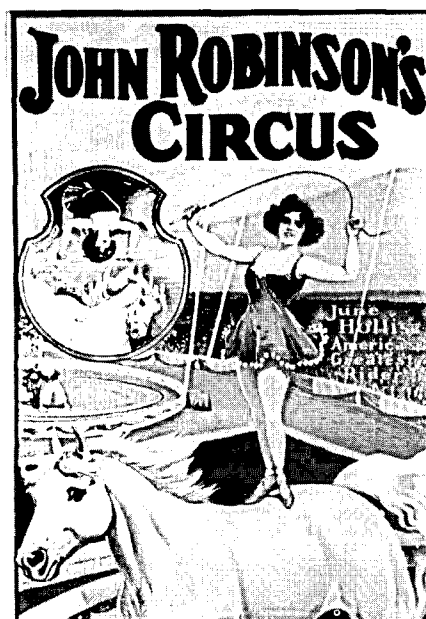
The "Old John" circus was long a favorite in the deep South, so much so that during the last season of the Sells-Floto Circus in 1932 the Robinson title was added to the Floto show late in the season while it made its late fall tour. The last season of the John Robinson show was 1930. At the end of the 1930 season the Erie Lithographing Co., principal supplier of Robinson paper, had fifty different sizes and designs of Robinson paper on hand. Illinois Lithograph Co. had only two sizes of the June Hollis bill on hand. The Central Lithographing Co. had two designs left.

In the early 1920s the American Circus

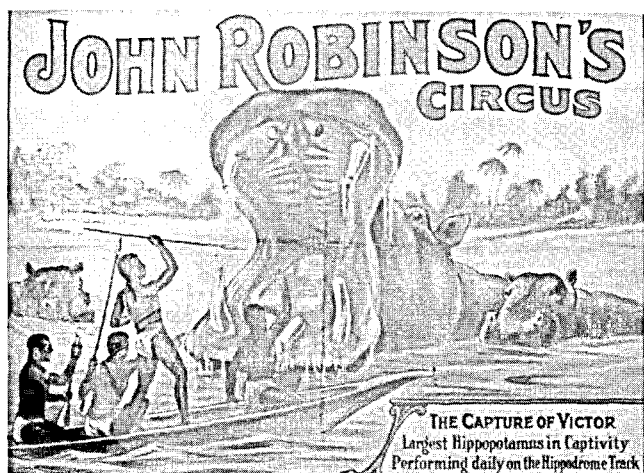
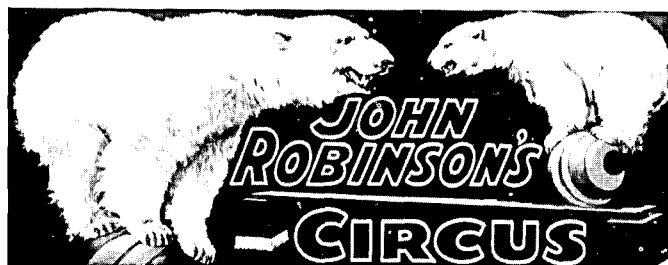
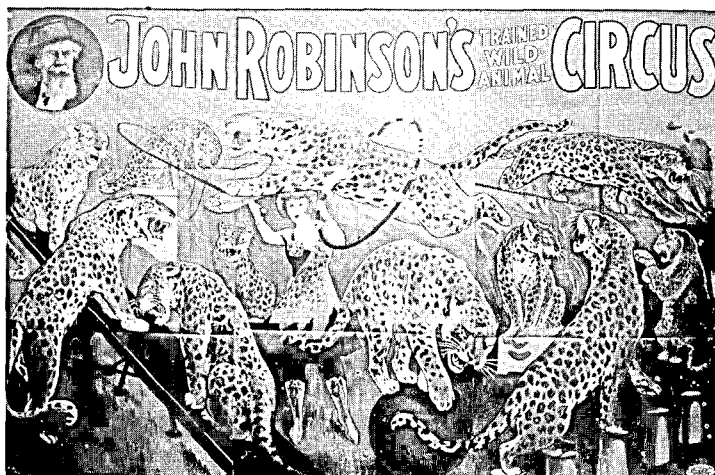
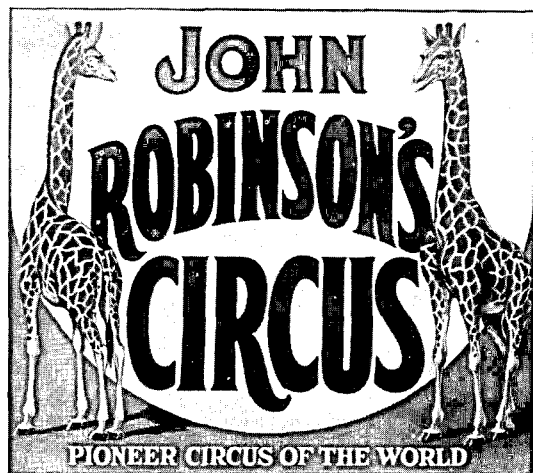
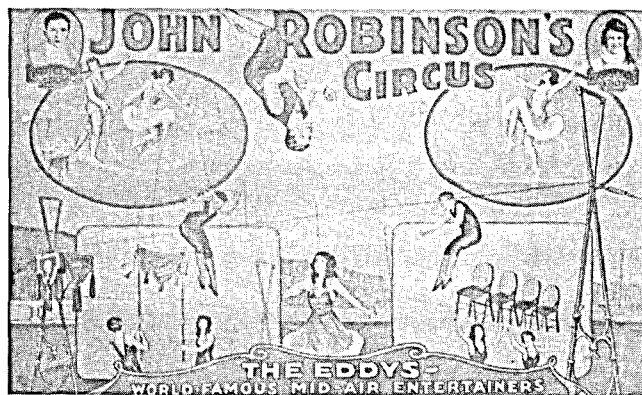
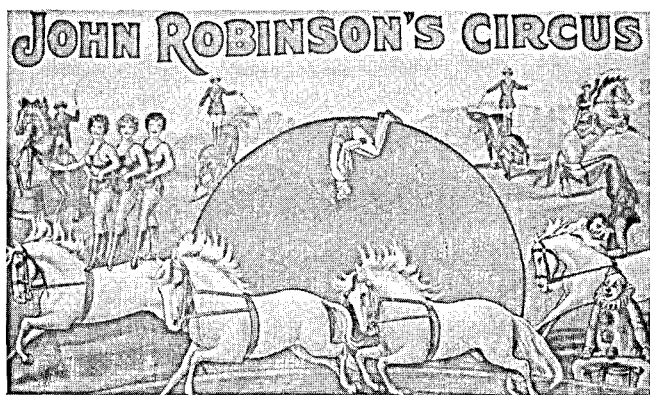
Corporation purchased a limited amount of paper from the Strobridge firm. The two Strobridge bills pictured here are the elephants with Irene Montgomery and the Flying Wards. These are from the Harold Dunn Collection.

All of the remaining posters shown here are from the Erie firm, The lady leopard trainer is a 20 sheet; the polar bears is a 15 sheet; the John Robinson portrait bill is a 6 sheet as is the giraffe poster. The four clowns bill is a 15 sheet. All of these are from the Circus World Museum Collection.

The other posters are from the Pfening Collection.









# CIRCUS WORLD MUSEUM PRESENTS THE PAPERS OF WILLIAM P. HALL

By Tom Parkinson For  
The Circus World Museum

## J. AUGUSTUS JONES

The William P. Hall correspondence with J. Augustus Jones, his widow and his manager introduces some points of confusion. But it also gives some unique insight into the Jones operation, which has left little else in the way of photos, letters or other circusiana.

Jones and his brothers operated several shows at a time, and in 1906 they probably had three — Jones Enormous Shows, Cole & Rogers, and Jones & Adams. But they threw titles and cars around so much that one cannot be sure of the roster at a given date. Jones had the Indian Bill Wild West on 13 cars at one time, three cars another. It is said to have been the nucleus for the Jones Enormous Shows of 1906, and this show was on 16 cars, according to *Billboard*. Hall came into the picture after that, insofar as we know from the William P. Hall Papers at the Circus World Museum.

J. Augustus Jones wrote Hall that the Jones Enormous Shows were for sale. (JAJ-WPH 10/4/06). A few days later, responding to Hall's answer, Jones sent a list of equipment and priced it at \$11,000. But he listed only 6 cars, not 16. The list omits coaches entirely, and Jones mentioned retaining some items so his brother could take out a two-car show. These included a sleeping car and baggage car, presumably from the Jones Enormous show. All this still left the question of how many cars this Jones show used in 1906. But the list of equipment does illustrate that the outfit was on basically Wild West show gear. This list included, in part:

"20 head draft horses, 22 head saddle

horses, 7 pieces canopy 50 feet long and 30 feet wide, 2 corner pieces (for wild west canopy top) 30x30, horse tent, side show tent, 1 set railroad runs and ropes, camel, zebra, hyena, "emeau", one five-foot female performing elephant.

"Two 60-foot flat cars, one 50-foot flat car, one 60-foot baggage car, one 50-foot stock car built for elephant car, one 50-foot advertising car.

"Two plank wagons, canvas wagon, stake and chain wagon, stringer and pole wagon, band wagon, tableau for No. 2 band, open den 13 feet long, two fine cages, a medium sized cage, ticket wagon, cook house wagon, camp outfit, blacksmith outfit, Wild West stage coach, (all with the show touring Alabama), plus a big baggage wagon, Cinderella wagon and a 12-foot open den, (all in storage at Pittsburgh)." (JAJ-WPH 10/9/06)

Examination reveals that Jones was holding out more than coaches, or at least not listing them. Lights and seats are examples. And it seems clear that 42 horses would not fit into the cars he listed, unless he was using baggage cars as stock cars. But as he said, his brother was using two cars, the ponies, the big lion and some small animals, and no doubt the little show also would use some of the seats and lights. If Hall didn't want the lead stock, Jones would give \$2500

**J. Augustus Jones used this letterhead in 1906. The title is deep red outlined in black, the rest is black, on orange paper. All letterheads from the collection of the Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin.**

credit. The present show would close October 20. That covers Jones' letter.

Apparently Hall did not buy that show property, but they would correspond again in three years. This time it involved the Great Cooper Bros. Shows. It was showing in Robinson, Ill., when a letter was written to answer Hall's correspondence of September 23, 1909. It said in part, "If I can sell in next week, I'll sell all for \$4,000." It is signed with Jones' name, but not in his handwriting. It is addressed to Jones and the body of the letter refers to Jones as a third party. Moreover, Jones seems to have been on another of his shows at the time. So the Robinson, Ill., letter probably was written in Jones' name by C. T. Burch, who was manager of the show. (JAJ (CTB)-WPH, Robinson, Ill., 1909)

A second letter on Cooper letterhead was written by Burch to Hall and said he was glad to hear the stuff arrived. "The cars were inspected at Robinson. . . I hope the camel will come out all right." (CTB-WPH 10/14/09) So it seems clear that Hall bought that Cooper show.

A year later, J. Augustus Jones offered Jones Bros.' Buffalo Ranch Wild West to Hall. He said it was a 14-car show and that he had enjoyed a very successful season. (JAJ-WPH 10/31/10) This outfit was sold instead to Tom Weidemann and Hall would know more of it by that connection later.

Jones had his big Jones Bros. World Toured Circus in 1915. Before the season, he wrote to Hall to say that he had received wagons purchased from Hall as well as the arena iron and the seats. But, Jones, said, there was an error about the seats. Apparently Hall's man had mistakenly sent a set of seven-high seats although Jones never used seven-highs and had ordered eight or nine-high seating. Jones wanted to exchange them. He also had heard that Hall had sold the former Jones hippo to Ben Wallace, and Jones said it pleased him to know that Hall had been able to make a profit on that earlier deal. (JAJ-WPH 2/25/15)

A month later, Jones wrote to say he was sending the seats back and that he was coming to Lancaster that Monday, after the circus sale at Cincinnati. That would be the sale of Kit Carson's Wild West. (JAJ-WPH 3/19/15) His projected trip to Missouri seems to have resulted in some purchases, at least of horses, for Jones sent Hall \$302.25 to cover the first note on horses





due May 10. Jones reported that business was good and went on to say that he had a "... great show ... swell outfit. My parade is what gets them ..." (JAJ-WPH 5/10/15)

In July of the next season, Jones inquired about the price on the elephant from the Orton show that had closed and also to report that his own show, Cole Bros., was getting the best business ever and was on 18 cars. (JAJ-WPH 7/15/16) That is the last of the surviving letters from Jones himself. He died in 1918, and his widow wrote next.

She had sold an unspecified number of elephants to Hall and now reported that trouble with the railroads had delayed her in shipping the bulls. The railroads wanted to charge the regular, full circus rate for moving the elephants. She wanted to pay less. Finally, she agreed to send them by the Kansas City Southern Railroad from Shreveport, La., to Kansas City. But she could not find a railroad that would take them on to Lancaster. The cost to Kansas City was \$732.50, and one gathers she felt her duty was done in paying that much, regardless of where the bulls ended up. (MJ-WPH 11/9/18)

In the same letter she offered to sell railroad cars and show wagons to Hall. In February, 1918, her husband had held an auction to dispose of this Cole show but, after selling quite a bit, he called off the auction because prices were coming in too low. That left him with the cars and wagons that his widow now tried to sell. The elephants she delivered to Hall, however, must have come from his other Jones shows; Sparks had bought three out of the four Cole bulls at the February auction.

After nearly two weeks, Mrs. Jones wrote to Hall again. She was waiting to hear if those elephants had arrived. She needed word from Hall so her banker would release cash to her. (MJ-WPH 11/23/18)

Heart of the Hall Farm was this combination of barns and office car. This picture was taken after the front fence had fallen into disrepair. The barn at the far right still was standing when the Circus World Museum representatives visited the farm in 1970 but it was scheduled to be torn down. It had been used as a stable.



**The Van Amburg Shows 1906 letterhead has title in red with all other type in blue. The letter is written and signed by Jerry Mugivan, who was 32 years of age at the time.**

In fact, the elephants had arrived; they had not been stranded in Kansas City. Hall had arranged to ship them on to Lancaster. This was apparent from Mrs. Jones' response to his letter. Again she urged him to come see the wagons, the three wooden flats at \$900 each and the six steel flats at \$2,000 each. (MJ-WPH 12/11/18)

Mrs. Martha Jones closed with a light hearted comment to the effect that now Hall could send her a nice turkey for the holidays. Whether this gave him the idea or whether he sent her one, it is true that in the years that followed he did ship many gift turkeys to various circus people.

## MUGIVAN, BOWERS and BALLARD

The Papers of William P. Hall reveal

The office car had once been the advance car of the Yankee Robinson Circus and came to Hall's Farm in 1913. The big three-story barn in the rear housed horses plus elephants on the basement level and wagons on the second level. Most photos of the Hall Farm were taken along the street in front of the office and barns.

only a modest correspondence and related business with Jerry Mugivan, Bert Bowers, Ed Ballard and their associates in what became the American Circus Corporation.

But it spans the time from when both Hall and Mugivan were new in the business to a point near the end of their careers. And it includes not only some points of historical interest but also some rare letterheads and insight into operation of little-known shows.

Writing on a Van Amburgh letterhead, Mugivan said in 1906 that the stock he bought from Hall had arrived in very poor shape. Two of the horses had died of fever. The hyena was okay. There is no further word here about the purchase, but other sources say that Mugivan at this time bought what had been the Walter L. Main No. 2 Advertising Car through Hall. (JM-WPH 2/27/06)

It was two years before Mugivan wrote to Hall again if these papers are an indication. In that next letter Mugivan reports that Bert Bowers had arrived at the Van Amburgh quarters with the stock they bought. Bowers reported that Hall charged

Wagons were brought out of the door seen here to be photographed. Elephants were brought to the street or were photographed alongside the barn. In 1970 a small house stood on the old concrete foundation which once was the basement of the big barn.—Circus World Museum Photo.







Camels held nearly the same appeal as elephants during part of circus history, and William P. Hall bought and sold his share. These are posed against the rough terrain of the Hall farm. — CIRCUS WORLD MUSEUM PHOTO

them \$215 per horse and quoted Hall as saying that was the price he and Mugivan had agreed upon in advance. Now in the letter Mugivan stormed a little and declared they had no such agreement. Mugivan said he thought that \$170 was a fair price and that therefore Hall owed them \$400. That seems to indicate a transaction involving nine horses. There is no sign here of the outcome of the disagreement. (JM-WPH 2/17/08)

Mugivan's next surviving letter came on Howes Great London paper another year later. In it, he offered to trade two elephants for \$3,000 worth of horses. There had been some earlier correspondence about this, and now Jerry was reporting that the elephants were mother and baby and had been exhibited at the St. Louis World's Fair. These were "the same ones [George] Rollins had for sale," he said. (JM-WPH 2/20/09)

An interesting commentary is included in the only 1911 letter from Mugivan. He needed "eight draught horses, eight saddle not as light as last year's." And then turning to price, Mugivan said, "... Make it right as this has been a long hard winter on me and last season was the worst I ever had." (JM-WPH 1/16/11)

In that season Hall had a revealing correspondence with Art Bowers, who was a brother of Bert. Mugivan and Bowers put out a second show with the Sanger title and with a brother of each in a key spot. Bert's brother was manager. Jerry's brother was side show manager.

Art Bowers had paid Hall \$300 down on a railroad car, which was sidetracked in Des Moines, Ia. in April. Art no longer wanted it, so he was trying to get Fred Buchanan interested in buying it. Bowers would sell his interest for \$300, and Buchanan could make the payments to Hall for the balance. As part of the deal, Art Bowers would give Buchanan the stuff in the car: "roulette wheel, light, stove, etc. ..." All that was in April. (AB-WPH

4/6/11) Another letter came in October, but no one bought the car from Bowers.

Then in December — New Year's Eve, 1911 — Art took up the matter again. There had been intervening letters. Now Bowers wrote: "I suppose Buchanan had the car all season." Buchanan didn't own it, Bowers declared, and Bowers wanted Hall to instruct Buchanan to ship the car to Hall. In this complaint about Buchanan's apparently free loading the pie car all season, Bowers reported also that "He stole a car from Eddie Martin's partner and one from the [Vincent] Transportation Co." No doubt he meant the Venice company. (AB-WPH 12/31/11) But this reflects the attitude nearly every showman—even rough grifters — had about Buchanan.

The correspondence returns to Mugivan and the Howes show of 1913. At the end of the season Mugivan seems to have been trying to sell elephants and Hall must have questioned the price. So Mugivan explained how he had arrived at it: The elephant Rubber was old, had one eye and Mugivan figured it for \$1,000. The other, Fanchion, was priced at \$2,000. (JM-WPH 11/5/13)

Shows frequently sold off their horses in the fall and bought new stock in the spring, thus avoiding winter feed bills. At the end of the 1914 season, Bowers offered to sell to Hall some 22 baggage horses and

**Ed Ballard used the Carl Hagenbeck Circus title on Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1916. The animals are gold with the rest in deep blue, the full design and lettering is embossed.**



This photo was taken on the same day as a couple of others in the collection, undoubtedly as elephants were paraded for prospective buyers. At left is the office car and horse barn. At right are houses at the north edge of Lancaster. — CIRCUS WORLD MUSEUM PHOTO.

15 wild west horses. All were "old and second-hand" and they had come, not from Howes show on whose letterhead he wrote, but from the Robinson show. (BB-WPH 11/11/14)

Just a week later, Mugivan wrote that they had shipped to Hall draft horses at \$110 and 13 broncos at \$40 for a total of \$2,610. (JM-WPH 11/18/14) So Hall had accepted their offer.

In 1915, Bert Bowers wrote from the Robinson Famous Show about two kangaroos and a puma for \$275 and then about cockatoos and pumas. (BB-WPH 4/9 & 14/15)

Ed Ballard wrote to Hall twice that is known of in the time he held the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus and before he was a partner with Mugivan and Bowers. Moreover, he used a novel letterhead which read "Carl Hagenbeck Circus", even though it was not the old 1905-06 Hagenbeck paper, this was after the combination, and his only show used the Hagenbeck-Wallace title. Once he wrote to say he wanted the camels Hall offered but the price was too high. (EB-WPH 11/25/16) In the second letter he said he wanted to buy a bay horse of at least 2350 pounds — the heaviest ever mentioned in the Hall papers. It was to be



**CARL  
HAGENBECK  
CIRCUS**



WINTER QUARTERS, WEST BADEN, IND.

R. M. HARVEY  
ADVANCE MANAGER



"chunky, block built for a pull-up team at the runs," thus explaining the need for weight. (EB-WPH 6/21/17)

On John Robinson stationery, Mugivan said in early 1920 that "If I decide to put a show out, will be out to see you." He also offered for sale four extra elephants at West Baden. (JM-WPH 1/21/20) Mugivan did decide to frame a new show and he did see Hall. As a result the Howes show returned to the road with 100 horses and three elephants from Hall. (Billboard 2/21/20) One could ask why Mugivan wanted to sell elephants at West Baden and buy elephants at Lancaster, but the Hall papers don't give the answer.

With Howes stationery, Charles Bowers reported on details of the winter quarters at Montgomery, Ala., stating they would carry 45 cats and would have 25 open cages for parade. (CB-WPH 12/19/21)

It will be recalled that Mrs. J. Augustus Jones had kiddingly asked Hall for a turkey at Christmas time. Of course it is not clear that she started it all, but in fact Hall did send many Christmas turkeys in the years that followed. He sent a lot of them to the Peru, Ind., circus men. Mugivan wrote on December 28, 1921, to thank him for one. In February and March he wrote about the landing date and delivery at New York of some elephants. (JM-WPH 2/15/22; 3/21/22)

Following the Corporation format, the Gollmar Bros. 1922 letter to Hall was businesslike, formal and without individual names. But its author then blew all that by adding a P.S. to say hello from Jess Adkins. (JA-WPH 4/29/22)

Mugivan wrote on Christmas Eve, 1922, to thank Hall for four turkeys, and Adkins wrote on New Year's Eve, 1925, to thank him for another.

Phil Castang offered two blind polar bears for sale from Hagenbeck-Wallace (PC-WPH 4/20/26) With Sells Floto letter-paper Mugivan said on New Year's Day, 1926, that he had surplus horses for sale. With Hagenbeck-Wallace paper, he said on January 15, 1927 that he would sell surplus tigers, elephants, etc. and that he needed ten dun or creams, 950 to 1050 pounds for liberty horses. (JM-WPH 1/15/27) Not long after, Bowers wrote from John Robinson that he would sell to Hall some surplus cats plus two elephants, Toto and Mary, which were the same two that Bowers and Mugivan had acquired when they had bought the Yankee Robinson show from Hall years before. (BB-WPH 5/3/27) (That helps clear the old question of whether Mugivan got that show from Buchanan or Hall, but some doubts still exist.)

One of their most interesting transactions came in 1927. The letters indicate that Sells Floto Circus bought 40 camels at Port Said, Egypt, and then sold 27 of them, plus two elephants, to Hall. The letters do not indicate whether the elephants are those that Bowers offered the month before.

Using a Robinson letterhead, Bowers wrote that he was enclosing for Hall's signature a note for \$8,500 for 90 days covering two elephants and 27 camels. He also



**This Al G. Barnes letterhead, used in 1906, is all black, except for the title and frame around Barnes' photo, which is gold.**

enclosed the Department of Agriculture's quarantine receipt for the camels. (JM-WPH 6/26/27) The receipt, in the Hall Papers, is dated Feb. 22, 1927.

Then comes a series of letters to acknowledge receipt of payments from Hall starting within the 90 days. Bowers received \$3,000 (BB-WPH 9/27/27), then another \$3,000 (10/24/17) and then \$2,500, at which time he also asked Hall for the interest (12/9/27) and we still don't know if he got it. But he did get a Christmas turkey (BB-WPH 12/30/27). So did Danny Odom (DO-WPH 12/31/27), Zack Terrell (ZT-WPH 12/31/27) and a year later, Jess Adkins. (JA-WPH 12/22/28)

Zack Terrell wrote also to offer Hall two Sells Floto elephants, Prince and Tommy, saying that the "only fault of Prince is that he fights the females in the cars." (ZT-WPH 2/23/29)

In mid-season, 1929, Mugivan went to Danville, Ill. to see the Buck Jones Wild West. No doubt he knew it was in bad shape and might fold, which it did on that day. Mugivan met D. T. Pilchard, who held the chattel mortgage on the wild west show property, and loaned him \$120. Subsequently, the property was taken to the Hall farm.

Mugivan sent Hall the promissory note from Pilchard and said that if Hall did any business with Pilchard would he please "hold out mine?" Mugivan wanted Hall to collect the \$120 plus a \$5 interest charge. (JM-WPH 7/23/29) A week later Mugivan wrote to ask Hall if he had collected. But on August 7, Mugivan acknowledged receipt of the uncollected note. (JM-WPH 9/7/29)

Thus ends the Corporation correspondence in the Hall papers. In about three months, Mugivan, Bowers and Ballard sold their shows and in a few more months, Mugivan died.

Mugivan was one of the participants in Hall's correspondence about Palmer Bros. which was reported under that show's title.

Separate correspondence about Hall's holding the Buck Jones equipment is yet to be covered in this series.

## AL G. BARNES

While certain showmen's names long have been connected with that of William P. Hall, there were many who had no link with him so far as our knowledge then covered. One of these was Al G. Barnes. But now we know that he, too, came to Lancaster.

In 1906 with a letterhead for the Al G. Barnes Trained Animals, with headquarters at Chester, Pa., Barnes wrote to say Hall's price for an elephant was too high. He also reported that his recent purchase, a male lion, had arrived and that he was in the market for Hall's "smallest female lion" for \$300. (AGB-WPH 3/4/06). Later that year he wrote again about buying lions.

At this time, Barnes operated animal acts and worked with carnivals and other men's circuses but had no independent show of his own. He wrote about that from quarters in Spokane in 1909, when he told Hall that Barnes had just ended his best season and that his acts were now in vaudeville for the winter. Included were Barnes' leopard act, sea lions, three elephants, big lion act, riding lions, and bears. In all, Barnes owned 16 such acts.

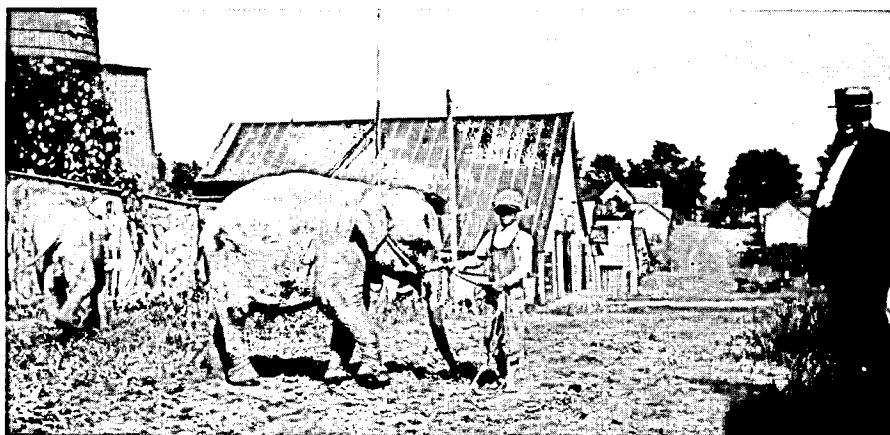
But he wrote that he had no railroad cars of his own and that this was his greatest drawback. Does Hall have cars, cages or wagons for sale or lease, he asked?

"I need about ten cars. Probably I could get along with nine," Barnes wrote to Hall. (AGB-WPH 10/29/09)

There is no evidence in the Hall Papers that the Barnes cars came from Hall, but by the opening of the next season, Barnes had ten cars from some place and was well launched as an independent circus.

That ended Al G. Barnes' direct correspondence with Hall, if the files are an indication, but three other letters came from Barnes people. In 1914 on a Barnes letterhead, Charles Ives wrote to say he planned a new ten-car show and asked if Hall could equip it. Cheerful Gardner is





remembered as an elephant man and it was in that role that Hall wrote to him. But Gardner replied on a letterhead for Cheerful Gardner's Babboons. Hall wanted Gardner to break lions and elephants for him and go to Europe for more elephants. Gardner asked about the salary and duties and he asked if Hall had any little elephants for sale. (CG-WPH 11/3/19). And again in 1921, Gardner wrote from the Barnes show to ask if Hall had any elephants, camels or lion for sale. (CG-WPH 9/26/21).

## CHARLES SPARKS

The Sparks Circus is one of those high-line outfits that supposedly had little contact with William P. Hall's second-hand stuff. Circus historians have known that Sparks once leased Hall elephants. But the existence of other deals between these two favorite showmen had been forgotten in history until the Hall Papers came to light.

In 1909, Charlie Sparks wrote to Hall that he had "had some bad luck with horses" and therefore needed a six-horse hitch. (CS-WPH 6/28/09).

In January, 1910, Sparks wrote from his Shreveport, La., quarters that he needed 12 horses. He had "had a quiet season", so he could pay only \$1,000 down and would need credit on the balance. (CS-WPH 1/12/10). By March he reported those horses had arrived in fine shape. He also relayed information that James Patterson did not want to sell his elephants (The Hall papers include several such mentions that indicate Hall sought to buy those bulls.) And Sparks asked if the Clark cars or elephants were for sale. This referred to the recent decision of M. L. Clark to give up railroading after a trial season and return to wagon tramping. (CS-WPH 3/9/10). There is no indication that Hall had anything to do with the Clark gear, and in any case Sparks wasn't the one who got it.

Then in June, 1910, Sparks sent Hall \$2020, completing what appears to have been one of Hall's usual lease-purchase pacts on horses. (CS-WPH 6/6/10).

There were only annual letters for a while, if the William P. Hall Papers are complete. In late 1911, Sparks said he wanted to add two cars to his train and

**An unidentified youngster poses a baby elephant in the muddy Hall Farm road. Another elephant wanders alongside the fence. In the distance are houses at the north edge of Lancaster. Bert McClain, Hall's long-time assistant, is at right.—Circus World Museum Photo.**

asked what Hall had for sale. (CS-WPH 10/30/11). Other sources say that the show did add two cars for 1912, but the letters don't indicate it was Hall who supplied them or their contents.

In late 1912, Sparks visited the Hall farm at Lancaster. Upon his return to the show he found business was light, but he still wanted to buy some things he had seen at Hall's. First, he wanted to buy the green tableau bandwagon he had seen there—"not the white and gold or blue and gold but the green one, not so heavily carved." It will be interesting to see if wagon historians can identify this one. Sparks also wanted "the white camel that is blind in one eye." One recalls that for several seasons the Sparks show featured a white camel. He also wanted Hall to ship a llama, eight manège horses and the ponies they had discussed. (CS-WPH 11/26/12).

A year later, on Christmas Eve, 1913, Charles Sparks wrote to his own kind of Santa Claus. He told Hall that he wanted to enlarge again (and he did boost his show from nine cars to 12). Sparks wanted price

**The John H. Sparks Shows 1909 letter-paper is printed in dark blue, and is signed by Charles Sparks with a blue pencil.**

quotations on two small elephants, one camel, the seal cage, two cross cages and the Buffalo Bill bandwagon. He was looking for two manège horses, four black horses for breaking purposes and 12 draft horses, 1400 to 1500 pounds, all short blocky greys not over five years old. (CS-WPH 12/24/13).

Hall got right back to him with a proposition that is not recorded and we can't tell if all of the items were included. But we do know that Sparks wired his acceptance and then wrote a letter to transmit the check.

"Remember the cross cages I picked. Also seal cage," Sparks wrote. "This is the biggest purchase I have ever made at one time." And someone tipped him off: "I am told the little male elephant is a little mean . . ." (CS-WPH 12/30/13).

While the Papers don't indicate how much of the want list Hall could fill, other sources say that Sparks then got at least the two elephants, a camel and 18 horses, perhaps more.

On Valentine's Day, Sparks wrote something other than a valentine for Hall. The cages and harness had arrived. The cross cages were in very bad shape and Sparks said he would have to get them repaired and painted again. He wasn't happy. (CS-WPH 2/14/14).

Again, the correspondence became quite thin, perhaps because the deal soured a little, and it was nearly three years before Sparks wrote the next letter that we have. And then he wrote two on the same day. In one he asked if Hall had two elephants for sale. In the other, he asked if Hall were interested in buying the Sparks show. (CS-WPH 12/2/17). But of course, nothing came of that.

In 1920 Sparks tried another Hall purchase, but again it went awry. He wanted a six-horse hitch and a four-horse hitch, plus a workingmen's sleeper. (CS-WPH 1/8/20). On February 6, 1920, Sparks wrote:

"The horses arrived in an open car and I was very disappointed in them. Now you wired me that Heath was shipping his four with mine, and no doubt when they unloaded and fed they picked out the four best horses. The stock arrived quite sick and I am afraid that I will lose some of them. Three of them are in very bad shape. Have worked night and day on them.

"I was in hopes of getting 12 fine horses,





as I did not try to cut your price on them and gave you what you asked and asked you to pick me out two good six-horse teams. Two of these horses don't mate anything in the 12; that is why I think someone made the switch.

"It is not right to ship anyone's stock in another man's shipment. There was no one came with the stock and you wired me there was a man in charge. . . . Your friend, Chas. Sparks." (CS-WPH 2/16/20).

After that, Sparks wrote but little. In December, 1921, he thanked Hall for a Christmas turkey and said he might buy an elephant. A year later there was another turkey and Sparks offered to sell bears.

Then on January 31, 1923, Charles Sparks wrote ". . . (I) see Fred Buchanan is going out again. Guess a man cannot quit this game, and still it is the toughest business on earth." (CS-WPH 1/31/23).

That concluded their correspondence so far as these Papers indicate. The two showmen went their separate ways, but both continued in that "toughest business on earth."

## NORRIS & ROWE

Like the Ranch and others, the Norris & Rowe Circus had several transactions with William P. Hall that are well known in circus history but not documented in the William P. Hall Papers at the Circus World Museum.

Instead, another transaction is recorded. And there are enough pieces missing to leave it as one of the more interesting puzzles for circus historians to solve.

This much is clear: The Norris & Rowe show had a wreck at Saskatoon, Sask., in July, 1906 and they were using the Hall Farm as a base for replacing losses. But the way these letters read it is not clear whether the damaged stuff was sent to Hall, or if cars were sent there for new loads or if the show sent a buyer to the farm or even if all of the transaction was due to the wreck.

The train pile-up cost them eight cages, four tableaux and a new ticket wagon, as well as baggage wagons. Five flats had left the rails.

The Hall Papers pick up with a letter from C. I. Norris, in which he mentions sending \$500 for "the last three cages" purchased from Hall.

Norris said that Hall could expect their general agent, E. C. Warner, to contact him about where to send the advance car, and one wonders how the bill car got involved in this wreck replacement. Then Norris said they would need a carload of horses and necessary harness and instructed Hall to ship this in Stock Car Number 17. Was that an old Norris car now at Lancaster or a Hall car already numbered by Norris?

The show owner also said that Hall would get instructions to ship a flat car with the ticket wagon and large tableau to Winnipeg. That one looks easier; the show bought those items to replace known losses and would reach the show now in Winnipeg.

## THE GREATER NORRIS & ROWE SHOW



The 1906 Norris & Rowe paper is blue except for the two photos which are brown.

Finally, Norris said Hall could ship the balance "as soon as we get near you." That would be more replacements. (CIN-WPH 7/24/06).

Two days later, the agent, Ed Warner, did write as expected and asked Hall to send the bill car to Woodstock, Ill. Then he asked, "Have you had any settlement with the Talbott people so that we could get some of those baggage wagons . . . now in St. Louis?" This is a reference to the collapse of Talbott's Fighting the Flames Show as covered elsewhere in this series. Hall had supplied the cars and wagons for that show, and when it closed he may have repossessed the rolling stock. Norris & Rowe still needed more replacement baggage wagons. (ECW-WPH 7/26/06).

A couple of key points will clear it all up. But meanwhile, circus historians can ponder just how William P. Hall figured in the reconstruction of Norris & Rowe Circus after its 1906 wreck.

## GENTRY BROS. CIRCUS

The Gentry name came to Hall's attention in a scattered correspondence from such celebrities as H. B. Gentry, Tom Tucker and Jess Adkins.

In late 1911, H. B. Gentry reported that he would trim two cars from his operations the following season and therefore had for sale an elephant, three camels and a puma, all at quarters in San Antonio. (HBG-WPH 11/30/11) A month later he repeated the offer.

On Wyoming Bill's Wild West letter-paper, J. A. Barton wrote in 1914, that this show had closed and was stored for the winter. "Tom Tucker has taken charge of Hall's quarters . . ." he wrote. (JAB-WPH 10/14/14)

One can only guess that a subsequent letter from Tucker was written after that stay. In the undated letter, Tucker asks the price on a big six-horse harness for use on the bandwagon.

"Also let me know what you will take for that wagon-making machine, the one I used while there . . ." Tucker wrote. (TT-WPH undated)

Tucker wrote again years later to tell Hall he was "coming to do business." (TT-WPH 7/23/18) That probably meant he was going to buy some horses for Gentry.

The remaining letters in this set came from the Gentry-Patterson Trained Wild Animals Circus. Much earlier, Jimmy Patterson recalled Hall's offer of \$6,000 for the high-quality Patterson elephants and stated he was ready to sell. (JAP-WPH 10/15/09) Now Patterson was not selling, but buying elephants. He wrote that he was interested in elephants but that Hall's price was too high. Declaring that Hall would have to get below \$4,000 for the elephants involved, Patterson said, "You know the price of elephants has dropped about 40 percent during the past year. . . ." (JAP-WPH 12/9/22)

Jess Adkins was manager of the Gentry show and wrote three letters that survive. The first thanked Hall for the Christmas turkey and reported that "creamed turkey on toast" had accounted for the last of it. (JA-WPH 12/29/22) The next was an offer to sell three lions. (JA-WPH 3/22/23) and the last one said that the show needed several cross cages. (JA-WPH 1/15/24)

## RAILROAD CIRCUSES 1871-1956

Do you know what years Sparks or Christy Bros. or Sun Bros. or Gollmar Bros. were on Rails? I have a chart called "RAILROAD CIRCUSES 1871-1956" available. It is printed black & white and is 12 x 17 in size suitable to frame. Mailed in a tube. Postpaid \$1.50

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# ONE SHEET

By Stuart Thayer

In the days before shopping centers the corner drugstore or grocery was usually successful or not depending upon its location. The geography of its neighborhood determined the amount of traffic from which it might expect its customers. This is also true of towns and cities. Rivers, canals, lakes and railroads determined traffic paths that led to the establishment of towns or made them viable or sounded their knell. During the feverish railroad construction after the Civil War, towns died because they were not on the route. The recent interstate highway construction had the same effect on many of the towns that are now bypassed by traffic. Even the wild, sometimes humorous, contention between hamlets in the 1840's and 50's to be named county seats at the time of the settlement of the midwestern states ultimately determined which place survived and which did not.

The geography of settlement — i.e. the reason a town existed where it did — was based on one set of conditions. The consequent geography of the internal improvements serving or not serving the place was based upon another. And of the two, it was the latter that became most important.

In research into circus history the traffic, the routes followed by shows, is a good indicator of the general movement of commerce because like the freight companies and stage lines and railroads the circus route was linking groups of the populace. Toledo, Ohio was on a good corner. So were Stamford, Connecticut; Tallahassee, Florida and Washington, Pennsylvania, among others. It was necessary to go through these towns in order to get to somewhere else. Thus, the traffic was there and so the circuses came to these towns because they were on their path to other areas.

John Polacsek recently completed a survey of circuses and menageries that played Toledo through 1880 and his list makes an interesting contribution to the continuing speculation as to why show routes evolved as they did.

The city came late to show history, compared to other towns in northern Ohio, just as it came late to history itself. Because of its location on the lower Maumee River at Lake Erie the town site was all but inaccessible. For thirteen miles upriver from Lake Erie to the Falls of the Maumee the land was host to a great swamp. A corduroy road of sorts was put through it at the time of the War of 1812, but passage was arduous and the area nearly uninhabited.

The first circus — J. W. Blanchard's — to play the area did so in 1827, going from Cleveland to Detroit, presumably by boat. Overland shows had the habit of moving west from Cleveland to Sandusky and then turning south to Norwalk, thus avoiding the swamp.

Toledo was founded in 1835 through the combination of two hamlets. The next year the first railroad west of the Alleghenies was completed from Toledo to Adrian, Michigan and the Wabash and Erie Canal, connecting the Wabash River to the Maumee, was opened. From then on the growth of Toledo was assured. These improvements brought the traffic and the people. It is now the fourth largest railroad center and leading coal port in the country.

To showmen going west from New York or Pennsylvania the towns in northern Ohio, filling up with the boom brought on by the opening of the Erie Canal, were good places to show. By turning the corner at Toledo they could go to Detroit and out the Chicago Road to South Bend and down the Michigan Road to Columbus and the east.

The first show in Toledo was a menagerie, that of (William) Hubbell & Company on July 16, 1841. We know very little of Hubbell at present, but suspect he was involved with the Flatfoots. Another menagerie, the western unit of June, Titus, Angevine & Company, played the town on July 20, 1842.

G. R. Spaulding's North American was the first circus in Toledo. Spaulding travelled out of Albany into Ohio and Michigan for three consecutive years and stopped in Toledo each time (June 15, 1844; June 19, 1845 and August 25, 1846). June & Turner's Circus performed in two consecutive years, June 21, 1845 and May 19, 1846.

It can hardly be doubted that Toledo was a popular showtown, but whether this was because the populace bought tickets or because the shows had to pass the corner of Lake Erie we must leave to later research. However, as one looks over the list of dates he is struck by the number of shows playing each year. These dates are equivalent in number to those in much larger towns, Boston and Providence, for instance. There were four shows in Toledo in 1850, six in 1855, four in 1858 and 1861, six in 1864, five in 1867 and so on. Quite a remarkable record in the light of present knowledge.

Polacsek's list from 1847 includes:

- 1847 — Howes & Company, August 2  
Welch, October 22
- 1848 — Raymond & Waring, May 9  
Welch, Delavan & Nathan, September 26
- 1849 — Antonio Family, June 11 and 12  
Crane & Company, May 29
- 1850 — Crane & Company, September 4  
Raymond & Company, April 22  
Sands & Company, August 3  
Stowe, n.d.
- 1852 — P. T. Barnum Caravan, August 20
- 1853 — Railroad Circus, August 13  
Dan Rice, September 12 and 13
- 1854 — Wesley Barmore, June 2 and 3  
Den Stone, July 1
- 1855 — Chiarini, June 18  
Johnson & Company, August 17  
Myers & Madigan, August 14  
Railroad Circus, May 18 and 19  
Raymond's Grand National Pavilion, August 6  
Sands, Nathan & Company, October 23
- 1856 — Herr Driesbach, May 14  
Welch & Company, September 12  
Spaulding & Rogers, September 13
- 1857 — Major Brown, April 25  
Spaulding & Rogers, July 27  
Levi J. North, August 31
- 1858 — Satterlee, Bell & Company, May 22  
Dan Rice, May 28 and 29  
Van Amburgh, June 25  
L. B. Lent, July 12
- 1859 — Donetti & Colonel Woods, July 25 and 26  
Antonio & Wilder, July 29
- 1860 — H. Buckley & Company, October 11 and 12  
Stowe, n.d.
- 1861 — Colonel Woods' Museum, May 30 and 31  
Robinson & Lake, June 27 and 28  
Yankee Robinson, July 6  
Dan Rice Railroad Circus, September 20
- 1862 — Dan Rice, May 15 and 16  
Robinson & Lake, June 3  
Dan Rice (second visit), August 1
- 1863 — Yankee Robinson, July 3 and 4  
Sands, Melville & Cook, October 19 and 20

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